DÆDALUS

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America's Schools: Public and Private

J. Myron Atkin
Stephen K. Bailey
David K. Cohen
Patricia Albjerg Graham
Gerald Grant
Elisabeth Hansot
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America's Schools: Public and Private

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DÆDALUS

Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

America's Schools: Public and Private

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SUMMER 1981: AMERICA'S SCHOOLS: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

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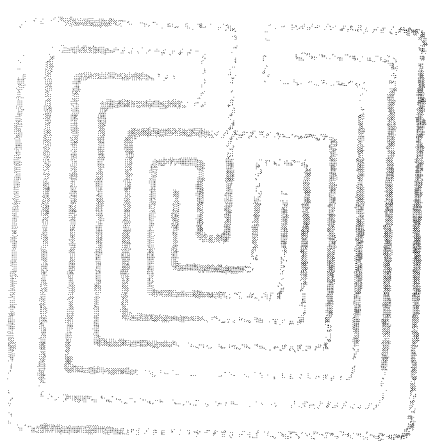

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Preface to the Issue, "America's Schools: Public and Private"

THIS, THE FIRST OF TWO DÆDALUS ISSUES on America's schools, public and private, is at once elegy and prophecy. The more conventional forms of nostalgia, characteristic of many earlier discussions of schooling, are conspicuously absent from these pages. So, also, are those somewhat more prosaic descriptions, fairly common in our own day, that depend on the recounting of tales of fresh educational disasters. These volumes, while not lacking in their fair share of warnings and injunctions, are remarkably free of a tone that could be mistaken for apocalyptic. This may itself be judged a form of progress.

In this issue, as in the one scheduled to follow, portraits of individual schools, together with analyses of conditions that obtain more generally, are intended to stimulate reflection of a kind not encouraged by the accounts of the mass media, with their now traditional emphasis on student violence, scholastic decline, teacher incompetence, and bureaucratic disorder. Does this imply, then, that the reality or gravity of these conditions is denied, that they are made to appear less significant? Not at all. No one who reads these *Daedalus* issues will feel in the slightest sanguine, either about the present or about the future. The evidences of disarray in the American educational system are too numerous, too obvious, to escape detection. They do not, however, necessarily translate into what the hasty critic, staring principally at bare surfaces, manages to uncover. The problems confronting American schools are substantial; the resources available to them are in most instances severely limited; the stakes are high, and it is by no means preordained that all will go well for many of them in the end.

Because the problems are so serious and so much more complex than is generally admitted, there may be a certain utility in acknowledging how little we in fact know about schools, how much we may be living in the first days of educational research, experiencing conditions not too different from those described by Dr. Lewis Thomas as applicable to medical research. If one follows the Thomas argument, first developed in *Daedalus* in the summer of 1977, that "we cannot stop where we are, stuck with today's level of understanding, nor can we go back," we can take satisfaction in whatever limited analytic and practical advances have been made while realizing that more revolutionary hypotheses and possibilities have not even begun to be entertained. In medicine, where the clinical successes are substantial, it is easy to ignore the extent of the research road that waits to be traversed. In education, where the failures are glaring, quick cures are commonly prescribed for conditions that call for more serious diagnosis. Where all have some persona. experience of education, autobiography and reminiscence, filtered through the distorting lens of romantic ideology and sentiment, serve as substitutes for

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concrete knowledge. While these conditions are not likely to change, they ought not to be wholly despised; they may, indeed, prove in the long run to be a boon to education.

For better or worse, America's "civil religion"—its belief in itself—depends on the traditional proposition that there can be raised up in each generation a new self-reliance, a new capacity to cope, a new willingness to experiment and innovate. However mythic these hopes may be—however unrealistic—they are linked to a popular faith in education, more specifically to schools that function well. If the public seems disenchanted today with much of what goes on in schools, accepting uncritically the most negative reports—not always wholly inaccurate—such disappointment needs to be seen in perspective. It does no good to imagine that ignorance, misinformation, bigotry, and economy-mindedness alone account for or explain the current public mood. While all these things undoubtedly exist, and may in some measure exacerbate certain of the conditions described in these *Daedalus* issues, they do not together explain the present discontents, which are all too real. The public concern calls out for more dispassionate and more searching inquiry, informed by a larger sense of history and a greater understanding of human nature.

To depict America's schools in their difference and complexity calls for substantial tolerance. No other attitude will suffice; no other can provide the insight required. Still, even the greatest tolerance will not guarantee against the constant intrusion of personal opinion. No one who reads these *Daedalus* issues will fail to detect the preferences—ideological and personal—of those who have written. There are significant intellectual and political differences between many of the authors, and while it is not the Editor's chief responsibility to choose between them, he is under no obligation to ignore or deny them. The differences that exist in these *Daedalus* pages exist also in the community outside, where they are even more exaggerated. The value conflicts that are at their core may be artfully concealed much of the time, but their reality is incontestable. It is no accident that America's schools have become controversial. Many of the disputes concerning their organization, purposes, and accomplishments reflect all too accurately competing sets of values that are being contested over by powerful groups in the society. Schools are exposed and vulnerable, not least because they are so open to the currents of public opinion. That opinion needs to be seen for what it is, ardent and often self-serving, but not immutable. Change, however, presumes always a political capability; indeed, a political will. The American democracy, with its many contradictory elements, is probably fairly accurately reflected in its schools. Only the more imaginative, capable of seeing and understanding this, will not find the discovery disheartening.

David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot open the volume with an essay that reminds us that America's public schools in the beginning were intended to be "above politics," free of the contamination produced by all such controversy, disagreement, and discord. If the schools emphasized certain values, or excluded certain groups, it was taken for granted that such emphasis and exclusion simply reflected a larger consensus in the society. We are reminded that the public school was almost a "sacred institution," the closest American equivalent to an established church. The ideology of these first schools, primarily agrarian, was Protestant-republican, which virtually guaranteed the

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exclusion of certain ethnic and religious groups, while giving prominence to values and habits that sustained the "chosen" people in their beliefs. When, toward the end of the nineteenth and early in the twentieth century, ethnocultural issues were less threatening, less divisive, and when other, more purely economic interests became more significant, the schools came under a new control. The new "managers" could lay claim to at least three distinctions. They were "above politics"; capable administrators, in short, "good businessman"; and educational "scientists." Their pride was in their professionalism—their knowledge and their putative independence. If the early school builders and school reformers had defined good citizenship as individual righteousness, a mildly secular form of evangelical Christianity, this enabled them to open their school doors to all white Protestant males, without reference to class, nationality, or church affiliation. Persuaded that the common interest of all such Americans lay in stability, prosperity, and order, they saw no reason to draw too fine distinctions based on earlier religious or national identities. When, less than a century ago, these men gradually began to be replaced by a "new breed"—"educational experts"—who claimed to know what was "normal and desirable," and who emphasized business efficiency and scientific expertise, education became a career. While few of them, we are told, quarreled in any fundamental way with the more traditional system of moral values, these men clearly saw themselves as "social engineers," seeking to adapt the American schools to the new requirements of corporate enterprise. It never occurred to most of them that their educational theories reflected either a cultural or a class bias. They saw themselves as "objective" experts, doing what everyone agreed was necessary, taking charge of a growing educational machine, increasingly open to the children of disparate ethnic and religious groups. In collaborating with school boards—small groups of "successful" laymen—many of the new "experts" assumed responsibilities as school superintendents. Education came to imitate business, which many Americans took to be the paradigmatic institutional expression of New World efficiency and productivity.

From 1890 to 1920, Tyack and Hansot write, no other lay group had greater influence in the schools than businessmen (and their wives), whether working for kindergartens and vocational schools, or seeking to make their own ideological preferences seem to be those of the nation. Before long, educators and businessmen were both saying that the building of character and the teaching of the three R's was no longer enough; the country needed men and women with greater competences, sufficient to serve all the complex needs of an advanced industrial society. More years of schooling and the assumption of major new curricular responsibilities by the school—these were the favored solutions. Tyack and Hansot, pursuing their business paradigm, speak of the schools gradually becoming "conglomerates," vastly expanding the scope of their concerns, but still committed to keeping internal peace and preserving the social order.

Many fundamentalist schools today, we are told, strive after this now lost innocence. But few who bear any responsibility for the public schools—and almost none in the large cities—imagine that such a consensus is still possible, that such an educational organization would be accepted. The "old order" collapsed sometime in the 1950s and 1960s. Educational leaders were pushed from their perches; their "expertise" was no longer believed in, least of all by

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those who had come most recently to the schools, whose demands and values would not be satisfied by a professional "business" ethic. The new "publics" refused to see themselves as intrusive "interest groups"; for them, education had to be political if it was to serve their special needs and those of others of their class and race. The 1950s and 1960s need to be seen, in short, as the end of an educational era, as important in its own way as the earlier push to "professionalism." It is impossible to restore, at least in public education, the world of the early twentieth century. The federal government is now too heavily involved, both financially and politically, and while all this may change somewhat, there is no possibility of the old "united front" of teachers and school administrators being reestablished. The old "professionalism" is gone; so, also, is the old class bias.

These views, not to speak of the analytic interpretations that lie at their base, derive from a particular ideological perspective. The authors have no interest in concealing their preferences; these are made very explicit when they write:

> Some people think that the eruption of conflict and the catalogue of controversy we have described has produced a net loss in public education. We do not believe this is the case. Protest movements have illuminated and partially remedied injustices. If our generation has to face the consequences of many generations of racism and sexism, that is not the fault of those protesters who brought the debt to attention. If teachers had to organize and become militant to gain decent salaries and some balancing of power within school bureaucracies, the prize was worth the struggle. If school officials were often blind to the constitutional rights of students, and legislatures deaf to the appeals to equalize school finance, recourse to the courts was justified. In a healthy democracy, values and interests are always in tension; no public institution, least of all common schools, can really be above politics.

If, as they go on to say, "the real successes of the last generation have been obscured," they never wholly explain why this has been so. Instead, they seem ready to accept the fact that the pendulum has swung, that there is a new mood abroad in the land, and that the earlier progress will probably not be sustained. Still, even in a time of retrenchment, as the Great Depression conclusively demonstrated, reforms are possible. What, specifically, do the authors propose? Briefly, that we recognize that public schools, for all their faults, "are probably the most responsive public institutions we have," and that only a goal suited to our time and place can serve again to create a sense of public good. What might such a public good be? An acceptance of the need for "full participation in the polity and [the] economy," with controversy and pluralism acknowledged to be the necessary concomitants of a democratic order. Neither Tyack nor Hansot seems at all daunted by the prospect of new disagreements; on the contrary, they welcome them.

Stephen Bailey, no less distressed by the public's seeming incomprehension of education's problems, and reflecting on the criticisms most frequently leveled at the schools, finds them "simply the most recent incantation of a tired and sullen litany." He recognizes, however, that the old political coalitions that could once be counted on to support all public education, from kindergarten through college, have virtually disintegrated. There is a desperate need to build

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new political supports. How can this be done? Who may be expected to help? What interests can be relied on? Bailey, impressed by what an earlier twentieth century political coalition accomplished, emphasizes the financial success of the group. From 1930 to 1956, he writes, in quadrupling the funds made available to public education in just over a quarter of a century, a political movement, presided over by a group of "academic scribblers," offered an educational "catechism" that had more to do with the organization of schools—the elimination of small rural, inefficient units, and their replacement by "larger, better-equipped schools"—than it did with either curriculum or access. The states were intimately involved; their legislatures were educated in their fiscal responsibilities for public education; school boards and professional educators were enlisted to serve as propagandists and missionaries. If the school boards could pretend to be "disinterested," the teachers could claim no such neutrality; they were clearly "interested" parties. Activist parents were called upon to help both. The strategy, we are told, was tailor-made for the middle classes. Suburban communities were particularly helped; although blacks and poor whites benefited less, the momentum was nationwide.

Federal aid to public education came later; in the first instance, to help remedy certain conditions produced by the war; later, to alleviate problems created by an exploding population. *Sputnik* produced its own impulse to reform. By the time Lyndon Johnson came to the White House, with his dream of being memorialized as "*the* Education President," all national problems, including those that touched security, poverty, economic growth, and racial inequality were thought remediable, in part through better schooling. The federal government had good reasons for placing education high on its agenda of fiscal priorities. The political coalition that now formed, that pressed for the education legislation of the mid-1960s was broad, including many who could claim to be wholly disinterested, concerned only with the commonweal, but embracing many others who stood to gain—financially, politically, and institutionally. Again, a handful of academics, working in concert with special interest lawyers, provided the rationale for new educational programs. State and federal funding of education reached wholly new levels. It was only when a significant part of this expenditure was recognized to be intended principally to serve social purposes—creating equity between the classes and the races—that middle-class enthusiasm for such increased expenditure diminished perceptibly. Bailey chooses not to give too much weight to this "perverse" development, or to blame the "school finance reformers," but he recognizes it as a significant element in the larger story of the "unraveling" of the educational coalitions.

While refusing to choose as between the many conditions that he thinks contributed to the new skepticism about education, it is clear that demography, tax revolts, and the Vietnam War all had some influence; so, also, did the civil rights movement, the urban fiscal crisis, and the drive toward teacher unionization. It is important to note that Bailey attaches considerable importance also to certain of the educational research of the period and to the representations of the mass media in causing public confidence in education to decline. Bailey is not sanguine; looking ahead, if certain present trends continue—with inflation, tax revolts at both the state and local level, an aging population, and an increased interest in voucher schemes and federal tuition tax credits—he discerns an

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educational map that could feature "ghettoized schools for the urban poor, non-English language schools for Hispanics, racially pure schools for the bigoted, religious schools for the devout, and for the well-off, a wholesale reversion to the private academies of the nineteenth century."

This prospect, so hazardous to American democracy, compels Bailey to reflect on the conditions that might prevent such a scenario from ever developing. His hopes derive largely from demographic, economic, and social factors. Working parents, he explains, will need schools more than ever; they will reassert their interest and their loyalty. The federal government may lack the economic and the administrative muscle to go through with many of its tax-credit and voucher proposals. American business and industry, with their obvious stakes in education, will again choose to involve themselves. So, also, will blacks and Hispanics, whose many school-age children will make their own legitimate demands on the system. In professional associations, foundations, but also in government, the many able men and women with substantial experience in education are not likely to be permanently silenced or disengaged, happily standing above the melée. Problems of national security, economic growth, and social stability, we are told, will themselves impose their own requirements, helping to create a more congenial environment for those who support public expenditure on education. Still, the author is uneasy. He knows that single-issue interests are today very powerful, and that these do not necessarily provide the constituent elements for broad-based political coalitions that will be partial to public education. Nor is it reasonable to imagine that such coalitions can be created by "journeyman politicians responding to majority pressures." The tasks are clearly complex; while they call for all the traditional political skills, they will also make immense demands on the imagination. The author forbears to add another quality—candor—or another talent—daring.

Michael Kirst looks to educational leaders to prevent the worst from happening. Because candor is called for, he insists that educators accept that there has been an unfortunate debasement of the school curriculum in many school systems. Too much attention has been given to the weaker students, he says, and too little to those who are more gifted. There has been too great a concern with procedure—technique, accountability, governance, and the like—and too little with what is actually taught. There has been a woeful neglect of our common cultural inheritance, a failure to understand either the relevance or the usefulness of such instruction. The long-range prognosis for public education, while unquestionably grim, need, however, never be realized. Kirst's strategy is to insist that attention be given primarily to state-level politics, a sphere that waits to be exploited. While it is difficult to know precisely why public confidence in education has declined—and not only in the United States—educators can help restore confidence if they will dwell principally on student performance, taking care also to meet the common charges that they and their schools are hopelessly bureaucratic, unresponsive to both parent and citizen demands. These are all serious charges that cannot be lightly brushed aside.

Looking at his own state, California, Kirst suggests that students will certainly be disappointed when they reach college. Studying academic subjects

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for fewer years while in high school, taking a smaller percentage of honor courses while being awarded higher grades, a substantial number delude themselves into believing that they will be given advanced placement when they apply. They will not. Indeed, far too many will not be prepared for college at all. How can the situation be remedied? By understanding, first, that minimum high-school graduation requirements quickly become the norm, that reductions in academic course requirements, for example, are easily rationalized and glossed over. If earlier standards are to be restored, as the University of California is seeking to do when it reintroduces a mandatory four-year English requirement for schools that are habitually requiring only three for graduation, the problems it creates for the school are really very substantial. The blame cannot simply be placed on schools that have not chosen to be rigorous enough. Where there is so much pressure for schools to serve as "society's problem-solver," alleviating segregation, assimilating and acculturating vast numbers, and doing so always with relatively limited resources, there is a continuing incentive to drain both funds and personnel away from purely academic subjects. Only later, when major deficiencies are noted, do critics bemoan the "failure" of the schools. On a very different level, Kirst writes, it is becoming increasingly difficult to know which students are college-bound and which are not, and what an appropriate curriculum for each might be. Again, this is an issue that only educators can cope with. So long as the California Legislature and the State Board of Education are so little concerned with improving academic course content, emphasizing instead the needs of the handicapped, of those who require bilingual and other special programs, the more traditional college-preparatory efforts will always receive less attention. Kirst asks that the state clarify its priorities, not that it abandon its remedial efforts. Where money is felt to be scarce—Proposition 13 being only the most recent effort in California to compel cutbacks in local school spending—all sorts of economies are made. Six periods a day are reduced to five; advanced electives are abandoned in favor of higher enrollment basic courses; summer school enrichment and advanced placement courses are cancelled—all these changes are made in the name of fiscal responsibility. Is it any wonder, given these conditions, that California students take fewer advanced courses than other average students nationally?

Schools, Kirst writes, "have been pressured into developing instructional courses in drug abuse, sex education, moral education, energy, career education, ethnic studies, parenting, environment, and so on"; this proliferation cannot continue. Indeed, the need, he says, is for schools to institute a core curriculum that makes a genuine effort to provide a meaningful general education. This is not a plea for electives to be abandoned; only that they be brought under control, rationalized, made more selective. Colleges and universities, were they to follow Kirst's recommendations, would accept an obligation to work closely with the schools, abandoning many present policies that provide all too little incentive for academic achievement at the high-school level. Knowing that all such changes, when not accompanied by increased state appropriations, can only serve to take away from programs for the disadvantaged and the handicapped, Kirst argues also for ways to increase state funding.

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Believing that the pressures must be political, he insists that educators take the lead, that they form coalitions with others, including child care and child health advocates, and that they make every effort to heal the breaches that are all too common today between parents and teachers. Because 40 to 50 percent of state budgets are today spent on education, the vulnerability of the system, in a time of fiscal restraint, needs hardly to be demonstrated. State political campaigns and local lobbying ought to consume more of the time of teachers and others concerned with education; national efforts can be left to others. That there is a certain danger in all such political activity—not least the danger of citizen backlash—Kirst acknowledges. He believes, however, that the risks must be taken. An alliance of particular education interests is no longer sufficient. "Unless there is a renewed loyalty to public education as a public good," he writes, "essential for civic learning and the instilling of democratic values," there is little to be hoped for. Kirst's strategy is intended to achieve such a large purpose; it is predicated on the idea that many have reason to be concerned, and that they can learn to avert their eyes from Washington long enough to recognize that the state capitals, while possibly less interesting and less exciting places, are in fact the virgin lands for new educational settlements.

In an almost contrapuntal manner, David Cohen and Barbara Neufeld return us to the themes introduced by David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot. In their very first paragraph Cohen and Neufeld announce their position. "For many Americans," they write, "the verdict is in: the high schools are failing." Neither author finds any basis for this judgment. How can the failure be as the public perceives it when so much evidence suggests that Americans today are better educated and have higher standards of living than they have ever known? When, in all American history, were schools so open to the children of the poor and, indeed, of all minorities? As for the suggestion that high-school students are not able to find jobs, statistics tell a different story. Why, then, do Americans not rejoice in the "experiment" they have undertaken? Why do they refuse to recognize that no other country has made a comparable commitment to universal education? Why is the commitment itself not seen to be a cause for celebration? What more convincing evidence could there be of a continued willingness in the country to bear both the expense and the burden of preparing young people for life in a democratic society? Why, indeed, does the discussion so often center around a supposed decline in teaching and the growth of student insubordination, the latter undoubtedly helped by the daily habit of heavy television-watching? When all these and comparable explanations fail, the authors say, there is generally a return to the traditional argument that the family itself is declining. However superficially appealing such explanations may be, the authors are persuaded by none of them. Instead, they offer the more original view that "the problems we see now are in good measure the result of past educational successes." If their argument can be sustained, much of the writing of recent years on the problems of schooling in contemporary America falls to the ground. Cohen and Neufeld say that education is "public" today in a way that it has never been; this is its true success. This has meant, inevitably, that schools are less "special"; they are no longer the privileged preserve of certain parts of the population, with others being asked to stand aside. "Public schools," they write, "are one of the few American institutions that try to take equality seriously."

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Schools, earlier in the century, when they first opened their doors more widely, followed educational and social doctrines that accepted inequality; they took for granted that certain children would be prepared for the professions, while others, clearly less able, would be prepared for other work. Schools, in short, assumed the task of sorting out the young, preparing them to labor in an industrial society. Ability came to be measured by IQ tests; educators pretended that merit was the sole criterion for determining placement. It never worked out this way; the system left far too many outside altogether. The schools never had to cope with "the most oppressed and deprived segments of the society." These were never admitted. Their destiny was set at birth: to work at an early age. By 1950, however, things were changing: in that year, for example, "roughly seventy out of every hundred adolescents old enough for high school were enrolled, a huge jump over the figure just two decades earlier." As the high-school populations grew, they necessarily included a greater number of black children and of the poor more generally. At this point, the authors write, the schools themselves became the problem. By the mid-1960s some of the earlier concern with providing good schools for the talented shifted to a concern with creating equal opportunities for the disadvantaged. This interest, however, Cohen and Neufeld argue, proved to be short-lived. When, in the mid-1970s, reports circulated of the decline of SAT scores, there was new talk of school decay. The old standards were said to be slipping; many argued that they would continue to decline so long as rigor remained in disgrace, with progressive teaching methods in the ascendency. Such explanations were far too simple-minded. The authors offer quite different hypotheses.

As an increasing number of high-school students made their way to colleges, they write, a more relaxed atmosphere developed in the high schools. These schools were no longer seen as the final shelter, the last before young men and women were obliged to enter the world of work. Much the same relaxation had taken place, they say, in the elementary schools some decades earlier when high-school attendance became common. With this freedom, the intellectual and cultural concerns of students could be more easily accommodated. Secondary school students could be treated in a more informal and playful fashion. Course requirements were eased; relations between the faculty and students became more informal. The academic offerings were often less rigorous. Yet, given the fact that so many of the students were biologically adult, and that the culture and the economy insisted on treating them as such, it seemed strange to many that the high schools had become "less businesslike," that the full implications of the competitive character of American society were being concealed from the young. Cohen and Neufeld insist that the relaxation was introduced not simply to accommodate the new and presumably weaker elements that were now being admitted. The economy and the culture, they say, were the more powerful forces pushing the schools in this direction. Because there is no universal love of learning, with many who attend doing so only because they have nothing better to do, having no promise of outside employment, the schools have been compelled to become a "sort of state-supported social service center for adolescents at loose ends." Inevitably, academic and social standards have softened. A high-school diploma no longer has the significance or reputation it once enjoyed. Secondary schools are simply less "special"; everyone is there. The schools, trying desperately to accommo-

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date themselves to this situation, continue "to proclaim the economic value of academic struggle," but they are rarely believed. Inevitably, the schools themselves become the centers of political controversy. In their efforts to keep the peace, outsiders are necessarily involved; inside, teachers and students, increasingly politicized, sense the unfairness of the situation; many are unafraid to say so. This, in turn, only helps to create new hostility in the public; it also makes the assertion of any kind of effective authority in the schools immensely difficult.

The authors accept that theirs "is not the only way to tell the story." The new interest in "minimum competency testing," the revived interest in the teaching of "basic skills," the growing popularity of private schools and of religious education more generally—all these need to be seen as significant evidences of a growing disillusion with contemporary public educational practices. While some of these developments will undoubtedly affect the public high schools, the fundamental problems will remain. For the authors, they resolve into one basic dilemma: how "to endow institutions that are public and universal with the sense that they are also institutions of special value, unique and attractive to students and teachers."

In the language of economics, schools are labor-intensive institutions; no part of their labor force is more important than the teachers. J. Myron Atkin, in considering the changing character of teaching as an occupation, is obviously disconcerted by many developments. How can one not be distressed by what appears to be the growing unpopularity of schoolteaching, the fact that fewer college freshmen opt for teaching as a career today than at any time in the last thirty years? Worse, perhaps, among those who indicate that they intend to choose teaching, their intellectual ability, as measured by standardized tests, appears lower than that of college students in any field except ethnic studies. Among those already teaching, more than 40 percent report that if they were college freshmen again, they would not choose teaching as an occupation. What better proof can one have of a dispirited calling, lacking the one quality—enthusiasm—that many assume to be the absolutely necessary prerequisite to effective work in the classroom?

Atkin refuses to suggest that these situations simply reflect deteriorating conditions in the country's classrooms. Larger changes in the society are clearly involved. Teaching, once a challenging opportunity for intelligent women who were denied access to other meaningful employment, no longer enjoys its monopoly position among this group. With vastly expanded opportunities, large numbers of women still choose teaching as a career, but many other options exist. Inevitably, the pool from which teaching can draw is substantially reduced. Also, with the requirements for a teaching certificate raised, in terms at least of the years of college-level preparation required, it becomes increasingly clear that other professions offer substantially larger economic rewards. Also, teaching has become a more precarious calling, not so much because of what may occur in the classroom, as because of what state and local authorities, responding to declining student enrollments and fiscal necessities, choose to do. The quick solution for financial trouble is to tell those who have invested time and money in securing teaching credentials that their services are no longer

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required. Many who find themselves summarily dismissed do not necessarily jump back into the classroom just as soon as a new teaching post is offered. If job security seems a less powerful incentive for many of the young today—when comparisons are made, for example, with those who grew up during the depression in the 1930s—advancement in a career *does* seem significant. Teaching, in fact, offers few such advancement opportunities. Students, aware of this, necessarily shy away from work that is not likely to change significantly for the whole of their professional lifetimes. Also, because of the somewhat negative attitudes of far too many American college professors about schoolteaching as a career, this communicates itself and acts as an additional deterrent. Atkin believes the situation to be so serious that only a major crisis will bring many in the universities to alter their negative impressions, making them willing to recommend schoolteaching as a career.

If competition, power, status, and wealth—the more commonly advertised values of many of the most successful men in American society—become also the values of women, the effects on a profession like teaching could be devastating. So, also, if there is no significant change in the present feeling that little can be done for the poor and the disadvantaged—either in schools or in other social programs—many of the *pro bono* sentiments that once led lively young minds to choose careers in social service will make such work seem futile, positively unattractive. This is not to say, Atkin writes, that today's classroom teachers are all incompetent, unhappy, anxious to be in some other place. The evidences of good teaching are far too numerous for any such caricature to be accepted. Indeed, the ability and dedication of many who teach provide some of the reason for believing that a way will be found to reform the profession more generally. Teachers, together with many hardworking school board members, are in a position to offer the kinds of criticism that could be immensely helpful in coping with many of the distressing conditions that exist today.

Atkin, recognizing that many teacher education programs are deficient, lacking in both intellectual content and rigorous training, knows also that there is a substantial hostility to "theory" in many of these programs, joined to an almost obsessive concern with being practical. While he is careful to say that there are exceptions to this, the general condition of teacher education is clearly unsatisfactory. Too much of it is taking on the qualities of an "apprenticeship model," where the student is required to learn essentially about "the practical predicaments faced by teachers." Routine and direction by rule are increasingly stressed; there is a loss of the independence that teachers once prized, that made their work with children seem so satisfying.

While teachers continue to pride themselves on their professional qualities, wishing to believe that teaching is indeed a profession, not too different from law or medicine, this is not the way the public views the matter. For the public, the teachers' drive to unionization changed everything. Teachers, with their new contractual rights, spelled out in the greatest detail, are, in effect, workers. While they only occasionally exercise their right to strike, they are thought to be more interested in securing benefits for themselves than in obtaining concessions for their students. While teaching still ranks relatively high among the various job opportunities that exist, fewer parents express a wish to see their

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children pursue teaching as a career. Atkin, looking ahead to the end of the decade when there will again be large-scale hiring—if only to replace the many retiring teachers who entered the educational system in the booming 1950s and 1960s—asks how the present period of quiescence and retrenchment can be used to advantage. In his view, it is essential that new ideas and new programs in teacher education be devised. This is simply not happening today. Indeed, unless more distinguished colleges and universities agree to make teacher education a more central concern, there will be no substantial improvements. Where students are so much less homogeneous, where the problems of maintaining a teacher's authority are so much more difficult, and where, as in many metropolitan schools, violence and crime are daily occurrences, there has never been a greater need for good teachers. The child, Atkin says, is first introduced to the community's values through the school. *Who* teaches becomes a matter of national importance, particularly in the public schools, where so many depend on a few.

If there is a good deal of conventional wisdom about the role and the importance of the schoolteacher, the same can also be said for the school principal. It is not uncommon for him to be depicted as the key figure in a school. Gordon McAndrew, while not wishing to denigrate the importance of the position—indeed, having a very substantial respect for it—believes that the power commonly attributed to the principal is sometimes exaggerated. A principal, for example, cannot make children want to learn. What, then, can he do? He can help make a "safe and orderly school with high morale and expectations," a not inconsiderable achievement. The climate of a school will always contribute significantly to academic achievement, and there is much that a principal can do to alter a school's climate; he, perhaps as much as anyone else, helps set the tone for the school. How does he do this? How is he trained? What are the satisfactions and frustrations of the job? Why are more than 98 percent of the country's high schools headed by males? These are only a few of the kinds of questions that McAndrew seeks to answer.

First, a word about the schools themselves. Public high schools in the United States are today bigger and fewer than they used to be. The average enrollment is about eight hundred, but schools in metropolitan areas are much larger, many having two thousand or more students. McAndrew sees few significant changes in the structure of the school day or even in the curriculum. There is, however, a substantial change in the racial mix in schools, particularly in cities; also, in the number who have abandoned public schools to go to private schools. Class sizes are smaller than they used to be; grades are higher, though achievement test scores continue to decline. Dismissal of students or staff is much more difficult, the courts and the trade unions being chiefly responsible for these changes. Technology has had little effect; the greatest impact, perhaps, is in the installation of sophisticated crime detection systems. Discipline is more lax; the "manners and morals" issue is preoccupying to many. What does the author think about these developments? McAndrew writes: "Public schools, once the pride of our society, have clearly fallen on bad times." What is to be done?

The leadership of schools can be improved. There is no reason principals, for example, must be almost exclusively male, implying that the position is

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much too rough for a woman to handle. Sex and race, McAndrew writes, should be irrelevant to the post. Its requirements are simple: "reasonable intelligence, communication skills (including listening), the ability to work well with people, confidence, and good health." The principal must be prepared to work hard; the tasks are numerous and time-consuming; visibility is all-important. Principals, like other administrators, are not very good in judging either learning or teaching; these are not the things that he knows best; he ought to leave them to others. If he concentrates on being a good manager, setting the tone for the school, he is doing all that he can for both learning and teaching. Courses in school administration will not help him very much; having once been a teacher may help, if only because it provides some familiarity with the classroom, and gives some additional credibility in his relations with the teaching staff.

Principals today are acutely conscious of the constraints they are obliged to work under both in teacher selection and in their assignment. Collective bargaining agreements, largely responsible for the situation, are not easily altered. The federal government, through its major legislative acts and its judicial decisions, imposes further limits on the freedoms that any principal can hope to claim. While many say that the community pressures are also substantial, being most frequently adversarial, McAndrew is not persuaded of this. Quoting from a recent survey, he notes that principals "ranked parental apathy and student disinterest as the greatest deterrents to doing a good job." It is the shrinking and weakening of community support, the author says, that accounts largely for the demoralized state of American secondary education. The restoration of morale—among parents, teachers, and students—needs to be the chief concern of all who claim to be interested in public education. McAndrew has a four-point program to achieve these ends; briefly summarized, they suggest that schools cannot be all things to all people; programs need to be tailored to the reality of diminishing resources; parents, for both ideological and political reasons, must be included in the setting of priorities; where not already bargained away, prerogatives of management ought to be preserved.

If public education today is in serious jeopardy, as all the authors in their different ways agree, it becomes immensely important that the schools show some conspicuous success soon. The disillusion will become more dangerous the longer it is permitted to continue. Patricia Graham, in recommending that high schools make literacy their chief educational purpose—defining this as the capacity to read, communicate, compute, and make judgments—is following closely on McAndrew's plea that the schools not try to be "multipurpose agencies." If the school's primary obligation is education, the fulfilling of that purpose is a task more than sufficient for our time. If Graham's proposal seems modest, the author is under no illusions about its intrinsic difficulties. Still, she can see no other academic program that will serve to rally support. Were literacy to become *the* prime educational objective, and presuming that it could be realized, there would be a double gain: first, to students who left school knowing that they had gained some real competence, that they had in fact not been cheated; second, to the community, which would become quickly aware of this success, recognizing that the schools had not attempted to do everything, but that they had done this one thing well.

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In the absence of an explicit commitment to literacy by the schools, there will always be a tendency, the author says, to choose other values—orderliness, cooperativeness, enthusiasm, or the like—and to insist that these are enough. Education and schooling, we are told, has all too frequently been justified by its social purposes—the instilling of a sense of morality, patriotism, mobility, or some other. The need at this moment is not for such a purpose, however worthy. Education must be justified in terms of the cognitive benefits it alone can provide; literacy, properly defined, can offer that kind of legitimation. More, it can be seen to contribute to fulfulling society's needs while also satisfying the needs of the individual.

For most of American history, the utility of education—its *social* utility—was made to appear one of its principal justifications. Only in the twentieth century, when many of the more obviously compelling needs of society were satisfied, did educators begin to explore what they chose to define as the unleashing of the child's creativity. The United States, in a somewhat more relaxed mood, was free to think in such idyllic terms. In practice, however, the creativity that came to be released was more frequently that of upper-class children than of others. It was generally assumed that the child of wealth and privilege had greater potentialities for creativity than the working-class child. Later in the century, a variation of this same principle dominated educational thinking; the less privileged, the disadvantaged, were promised access to schools and colleges in the expectation that this would afford them educational opportunities that could eventually be translated into better jobs. The thought was always of the individual; societal benefits were scarcely mentioned. Some, like Gunnar Myrdal, saw educational opportunity less as a personal luxury and more as a social necessity; much of the inspiration for the federal educational legislation of the last twenty years rested on some such premise.

Today, when the older-style American confidence seems somewhat attenuated, when the problems in so many schools appear overwhelming, goals are required that will help the individual but also serve the society. These must not be formulated in such a way as to exceed the school's own capabilities. Literacy, it is argued, is such a goal. In the past, those who pressed for making literacy a major educational goal generally argued that it would "stimulate intelligence, increase morality, facilitate employment, and spur modernization." Graham is not persuaded that these reasons are compelling. Indeed, it is easy to construct arguments to show their insufficiency, perhaps even their inaccuracy. For a society like America's in the latter part of the twentieth century, other kinds of benefits need to be considered. The author believes that literacy, as she defines it, will expand "the ways in which we can learn, understand, and appreciate the world around us." Literacy is calculated to produce more autonomous individuals, less tied to the specific constraints of class, sex, or ethnicity. A literate person is endowed with a greater number of options. The society also stands to benefit, not only in the advantages derived from having a more informed citizenry and a more productive work force, but also in being able to count on a public opinion that is more accepting of what the schools are setting out to achieve. In short, if the schools make literacy their chief purpose, and if they succeed in their aim, they contribute to breaking the present cycle of public disappointment, recrimination, and distrust. Society needs a success with its

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public schools; that success, Graham believes, can come through the realization of such a purpose. Hence, the plea for universal literacy, a difficult, but realizable, objective.

Gerald Grant, looking closely at the differences in schools, and availing himself of the research findings of both James Coleman and Michael Rutter and his associates, concludes that the differences in "school climates" are immensely significant. They are produced perhaps as much by the teachers and the staff as by the students. Despite our growing sensitivity to the subject, Grant holds that we still know far too little about it. We are not at all certain about how particular school climates are created. Grant's own experience in studying a small sample of schools suggests that a school's character emerges only when one understands "the relationship between intellectual and moral climates on the one hand and the nature of authority on the other." If authority exists principally to make possible the pursuit of a common good, the way in which it is instituted and exercised must shape the intellectual and moral character of a school. Those with primary responsibility for a school's functioning—teachers, principals, and staff—are of course central to any definition of its character. So, also, are students, with their particular social and cultural (class and ethnic) qualities. Parental preferences and values are also important. Finally, there are a host of governmental and nongovernmental bodies that help establish the context within which schools are permitted to function. These include bodies as different as federal and state regulatory agencies, testing institutions, textbook publishers, and advocacy groups of various kinds, many choosing to work through the courts.

In 1900 the public high school was very largely run by those appointed to administer and teach. By 1950, authority still rested in this group, but had to be shared with others, including the parents of the predominantly middle-class clienteles. By 1981 authority was greatly dispersed; federal and state policy, judicial decisions, and advocacy groups all had their role. The student body was more diverse; the school staff was more specialized and fragmented. The "commands" were coming from many locations. While any such neat chronological compartmentalization must exaggerate somewhat, Grant clearly believes in the essential accuracy of the distinctions he has made. He is not arguing for their universality; even today, if the urban school is characterized by bureaucracy, court orders, union contracts, and new measures of accountability, numerous rural and suburban schools remain fairly homogeneous and consensual, not subjected to equally strong pressures from outside. The private school, indeed, probably remains closest to what schools once were, free of the restraints of new legislation, of court orders, and the like. Grant suggests that the "great paradox in American education today is that only the privates have a public in the classical sense."

Public education, by contrast, particularly in urban areas, "is increasingly instrumental, technicist, adversarial, and officially value-neutral, all a result of good intentions gone awry and an uncritical faith in what schools alone can do to solve social ills." Public schools are the only institution in American society required to admit all; they are the "universal receptors" of our day. It is scarcely surprising, given this situation, that teachers have come increasingly to be seen almost as wardens, and that their status has suffered as a consequence. Grant

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believes that the legalistic character of public education, with its many adversarial qualities, is a shift of profound dimensions. Where authority has been lost by teachers, police are generally used to keep order. Students themselves have become both advocates and litigants. Teachers generally wish to remain uninvolved; that is the safest course. The teacher, a technician, finds safety in neutrality, and justifies the attitude by suggesting that the students' rights must be respected, that they are in any case sufficiently adult to make their own moral decisions. The author views this as an abdication of responsibility and authority.

This situation does not prevail in private schools, Grant writes. It is not so much the social class differences (as between the private schools and the public schools) that so impresses him as the differences in climate: the private schools are simply not dominated by technicist and adversarial attitudes; their constituencies retain a common regard for a more traditional set of moral and intellectual values. The private schools communicate a "tradition"; parents choose them for this reason as much as for any other. Their leaders exemplify certain values; they are generally given authority to choose teachers who will share those same values. The public school leader is expected to show quite other qualities; it is important that he be competent in interpersonal relations, fair in enforcing the rules, and strong enough to survive in an adversarial world. Grant acknowledges that he has probably exaggerated the differences, but he cannot avoid feeling that the American public high school, particularly in urban areas, "threatens to become a container for adolescents who receive the ministrations of a greatly enlarged core of specialists in a setting in which presumed equals argue about their rights, and individuals pursue their moral preferences in whatever direction they please, so long as they do not break the law."

All that society asks of such a school is that it be efficient. How is efficiency tested? Through standardized tests. When the scores go down, public protest is heard. Grant is concerned that these schools are so wholly inattentive to moral virtues. Schools are treated as if they were factories, and are judged by their cognitive outputs. This is clearly not enough. Three responses are possible: to withdraw children, to place them in private schools where provisional morality is still possible; to introduce such provisional morality in the public schools, assuming that this is still possible; to make education contractual. The first option, much favored at the moment, has no great appeal for the author. He is very doubtful whether many good new private schools can be thrown up quickly. The second option would call for a substantial rethinking of public education. It would also call for agreement on certain specific core beliefs. The difficulties of this option are immense. As for the third, the author recognizes that it denies all possibility of communities. It makes us all buyers and sellers, going into a supposedly free market to satisfy particular wants.

Jerome Kagan, while not explicitly responding to Gerald Grant's concerns, is clearly preoccupied with many of the same conditions. Like so many others in this issue, Kagan's concern is to give the public schools a responsibility they can meet, while at the same time relieving young people of burdens they have neither the wish nor the interest to carry. Starting from his own research with infants and young children, Kagan suggests that each person must be in a

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position to reassure himself of his own goodness. The schools exist, in some measure, to reassure individuals, to guide them into recognizing what personal worth is, to help them realize such values in themselves. According to the author, the first decades of this century were absolutely crucial; it was during this period that the idea became common that adjusting to local social demands was a better index of maturity than the traditional injunction that required the individual to exercise self-control. Feeling successful was more important, in this context, than feeling moral. Implicit in these changed criteria for an individual's judgment of his own worth was the idea that competition was good and that sympathy for others was not a prime virtue.

In schools, these values translated themselves as justification for the schools' assumption of responsibility as the chief agency of selection. Anxiety was promoted to a new "position of prominence in the mood hierarchy of youth and young adults." All this was a distant cry from the morality of the nineteenth century, at least for those in that period who had continued to believe that "sympathy" was a prime virtue, that "hurting" was a major offense. By World War II, Kagan writes, "the best child was the one who had been trained to meet the local environmental demands of achieving educational, vocational, and social success, and above all, freedom to actualize his special set of motives and talents."

In great detail the author reflects on the social conditions and the social theories that developed during this century to help reinforce these new values, indeed to justify them. He is as anxious to explain how, for example, the IQ tests came to be developed, and why they were quickly rendered suspect, as he is to indicate why the idea that "hard work" might not be enough to gain the great prizes of the society seemed so threatening. The racial inferiority hypothesis, which enjoyed a certain vogue in some quarters earlier in the century, was recognized to be particularly hazardous by liberals who understood how much it violated their assumptions about the absence of significant ethnic or racial genetic differences in American society. "In contemporary society," Kagan writes, "the relentless seeking of power, friends, fame, wealth, and love has lost its status as a sin; these goals have become rather prizes to obtain. The modern definition of unworthiness is failure to gain these resources. Put plainly, it is extremely difficult for an adult who is poor, powerless, and lonely to feel virtuous because he knows he has resisted the lusts of a corrupt society."

Such goods, however, were clearly not universally attainable. As a greater number of individuals became aware that they could not possibly hope to achieve these things, that they lacked both the specific technical skills and the status to accomplish much in any of these dimensions, many average adolescents and young adults began to doubt themselves, looking for reassurance about their worth. Anxiety gave way to anger; the adolescent could no longer see himself as "a potent agent in his own salvation." Among many of the young, there was a growing ambivalence about the value and status of college-trained professionals, a growing doubt about "the rehabilitative power of schooling." Many in the community felt deeply wounded.

Kagan, persuaded that the schools must help to heal these wounds, proposes that they set out to "ameliorate the bouts of anxiety and despair that permeate

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the mood of many American adolescents." How can this be done? By unyoking the idea of virtue to successful competition. In awarding a badge of virtue for competences that only a few can ever hope to attain, all others are necessarily deprived. The school's effort must be to discover qualities in the individual that all can hope to show. Intentions—behavior with others—no less than cognitive skills must again be judged and praised. Character, in short, must again be esteemed. Humility and honesty ask to be restored to their earlier repute. So, also, must generous acts of cooperation and nurturance. Academic (cognitive) mastery ought not to be ignored. It ought simply to be deprived of its recent monopolistic position. Most Americans are destined never to hold responsible positions; all need to feel that they "are in control of some events of significance," that they have "some measure of grace." For schools to help individuals achieve this will require them to rethink existing values and practices, which were not laid down in the beginning in sacred texts.

To dwell on the differences between these several essays—to insist on the intellectual and ideological distance that separates them—may be less useful than to suggest how they all express, though in markedly individual ways, a common preoccupation with certain aspects of the American educational problem, showing, inevitably, a certain indifference to other issues. First, as many readers will note, the authors all accept a common chronology, believing that significant changes occurred in America's schools in the first decades of this century, that equally important changes occurred more recently, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, and that further changes must now be anticipated. None of the authors seriously questions the significance of the developments of recent decades. All, influenced perhaps by the historians in the group, understand the hazards of subscribing to the simple and all too common modern proposition that events capable of engendering controversy and debate are by that fact alone rendered important. It is not the "sound and fury" of recent decades that has captured the attention of the *Daedalus* authors, but the fact that something dramatically new was attempted—the first genuine experiment in universal schooling. It is noteworthy that none of the authors deemed it necessary to locate these purely American educational developments in a more global context, that no one thought it imperative to see what others—not so different from ourselves—were also doing during this period. The references to Great Britain, to cite one instance, are casual and scanty—they have to do mostly with the research of Michael Rutter and his associates. No one, for example, asks how any of Europe's democracies, influenced by their own social-democratic and liberal traditions, and no less preoccupied with the extension of educational opportunity, sought to incorporate the children of less privileged families, of those who came with learning or other disabilities or were in some other significant way disadvantaged. Nor, for that matter, does there seem to be conspicuous interest in how other multinational or multiracial societies have handled the education of their "minorities." The rhetoric of this volume is markedly American, showing scarcely any concern with the experience or aspirations of others. One says this not in criticism, but only to ask whether there is any loss in such total absorption in the American educational effort.

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So, also, it may be useful to observe that while all the authors scrupulously avoid pointing an accusing finger at the mass media—particularly at television—for seducing the young, carrying them off to a fantasy world that has little reality and no great depth, all who mention the media and their role in creating sympathy or understanding for education do so somewhat disparagingly. No one pretends that the media have been at all proficient in their rendering of the "educational revolution" of our day. The television cameras have always been on the ready, remarkably efficient in recording scenes of physical and verbal conflict, particularly those taking place in the streets outside schools. So, also, many have faithfully broadcast the negotiable and nonnegotiable demands of so-called leaders, political and educational. There appears to be no equally significant record of the ways in which the media—television, radio, newspapers, or magazines—have served to initiate or disseminate their own more searching inquiries into the roots of our contemporary educational dilemmas. As for trying to describe or analyze changes in educational policy that might serve to relieve the public of some measure of its anxiety, such purposes, it would seem, are wholly beyond both the mass media's capabilities and interests. They appear to be doing all that can be legitimately asked of them when they communicate accurately what educators and others are trying to do or say. Alonzo Crim, in our next *Daedalus* issue, suggests that this kind of broad "media coverage" has recently been achieved in Atlanta, and he is obviously grateful for it. Perhaps this is all that can be asked for. Where, then, will criticism of new educational proposals come from? Who can be depended on to look closely at educational plans, showing a proper sympathy for their intentions, and a certain skepticism about their exaggerated promises? Where are we to find "critics" capable of detecting various kinds of dissembling, while not being constantly overwhelmed when they uncover evidences of special interest and of self-interest? Who, in short, is prepared to take the "politics" of education seriously? Who will recognize that this involves more than the recording of a succession of discrete events—legislatures cutting budgets, commissioners laying off teachers, parents petitioning for the banning of books, students demonstrating for a new athletic facility? If our authors are correct in believing that the "politics of education" are significant, it becomes imperative to consider how these "politics" are defined, discussed, and argued over.

Finally, a word about families. Parents are mentioned many times in this *Daedalus* issue, and always favorably. It is obvious that many of the authors recognize how much parents can do to help reverse (or at least ameliorate) the present unhappy climate in which public education finds itself. No one, however, seriously considers what parents, individually or collectively, can (or do) contribute to the education of their children. If the pressures on parents are indeed growing, not least because of the changed character of work and marriage—both having become substantially more demanding and more precarious in recent years—how is all this likely to affect children, and not only those unfortunate enough to be trapped in America's central city ghettos? The family, while in no sense the uninvited guest in this educational stocktaking, is given what can at best be described as a secondary or supporting role. Why is top (or at least equal) billing not offered? Is such a role no longer conceivable? Is there no one prepared to argue for the father's role in the education of his children, in

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the way that Alexis de Tocqueville once did? And what about the mother? What is her role? Simply to become a PTA advocate of the public schools and of public education more generally? These questions are not asked rhetorically. They go to the very heart of what a school should be, of why it is wrong for them to be physically and intellectually set apart, locked, and protected from the public gaze and public criticism, places to be visited on special occasions called "parents' day." If schools are vulnerable and fragile, this needs to be acknowledged, and not only by parents who have an obvious interest in their stability, but by all citizens. A society that allows an individual to believe he has no obligation to public education because he himself has no children, or because his children have already passed through school, is a society that has lost all perspective on its future.

This issue of *Daedalus* was made possible by generous grants from St. Paul's School of Concord, New Hampshire, now celebrating its one hundred twenty-fifth year. The willingness of St. Paul's School to support this venture, to recognize that, though itself an "independent" (private) school, the future of public education in the country is as integral to its future as it is to most other institutions, is worth noting. So, also, is the fact, more fully explored in the next *Daedalus* issue, that schools may be "exemplary" in quite different ways, and that there is no need (and indeed no possibility) of all coming in time to resemble one another. An analysis of American higher education that paid attention only to what was going on in public institutions would be thought sadly deficient. The same argument needs to be made in respect to America's schools. It is time that the more exaggerated caricatures of both public and private education in this country were set aside in favor of a more nuanced and meaningful description and analysis. In the coming *Daedalus* issue, portraits of individual schools, public and private, including St. Paul's, are attempted. They will, it is hoped, support, amplify, correct, and question some of the more general observations made in this issue.

A special word of thanks needs to be given to the Rector of St. Paul's School, Dr. William Oates, who has helped the Editor from the beginning, recognizing very early what such a study of public and private education might dwell on. Our gratitude to him is very real. So, also, it needs to be extended to all who participated in our "continuing seminar" on schools, busy men and women who took time off to share their knowledge and concerns in meetings at the House of the Academy, St. Paul's School, and Georgetown University. When, after a year and a half, draft essays were completed and circulated, we met once again, this time inaugurating the conference facilities at the new Academy House in Cambridge. This last meeting reinforced the sentiment many already held—education is not a subject for those who crave quiet and dignified expressions of agreement. The authors hope that some of the excitement of their meetings is communicated in these *Daedalus* issues. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the very special debt all of us owe to St. Paul's School, its faculty, and administration. They have made our tasks easier.

S.R.G.

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DAVID TYACK AND ELISABETH HANSOT

Conflict and Consensus in American Public Education

AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION has increasingly become a battleground for contending social and political forces. Those who shaped public schools in the past would have regarded this conflict as pathological, for they believed that the common school should be "above politics," a noncontroversial and integrative institution. Although education is an arena where different groups have always contended for benefits, there was never a developed ideology that justified such conflict. Both lay and professional leaders sought common ground and accommodation, and viewed conflict as abnormal and undesirable.

Public education differs from other sectors of American society where conflict is taken for granted and treated as part of the natural order. Religious denominations, for example, compete freely for souls and church members, each confident that its own version of truth and virtue will triumph in the end. The market system of capitalism relies in theory on economic competition, however imperfect actual competition. Clashes of interest between organized labor and management are accepted as a fact of life. The legal system is based on adversarial principles. Political parties fight each other with ritualistic regularity. Winners exult, losers hope for another chance, and factions know they must live with one another and that fair treatment of the outs is good insurance for the future.

In each of these domains competition is accepted as normal. The conflict is controlled by regular procedures and constitutional rules, and vehemence seems safe because it takes place within a consensus on political economy. It is also safe because contending factions in one domain do not necessarily overlap with those in others. Cleavages in economic class, for example, do not coincide with allegiances of religion, ethnicity, or political party.

But controlled conflict has by no means produced a just society. The distribution of wealth, income, and power has been highly unequal since the beginning of the Republic, and opportunity in American society remains profoundly structured by race, sex, and class. In subtle or blatant ways, race, sex, and class bias influence the rules under which competition for rewards takes place, and not surprisingly, those who benefit from those rules wish to retain the existing order. As in every society, public schools in the United States reinforce the interests of those in power, although they also mitigate injustice in a number of ways.

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With few exceptions, public educators believe in the basic soundness of the American social order and the belief systems that support it, including the value of controlled competition in domains such as politics, religion, and the economy. Within public education, however, they have sought to prevent organized opposition by finding common purposes and programs that all could agree with, or by providing "a piece of the action" for everybody who mattered. The genius of the public education establishment, like that of the Roman Catholic Church throughout much of its history, has been its ability to absorb dissidence and to accommodate demands by influential groups, ruling only a few claims as beyond the pale (often those stemming from groups that lacked power). Some policymakers have actually believed that schools could and should be kept "above politics," while others have simply seen that utopian demand as a smart political strategy, a way of keeping the camel's nose out of the professional tent.

Schools, of course, have always been political. In part, contests over control and programs in public education reflected direct economic interests, both the spoils of office, such as jobs and contracts for goods and services, and broader benefits, such as training students for jobs in industry. Other economic or political interests were more indirect: for example, teaching beliefs favorable to business or unions in social studies, or inculcating habits of PRIS (punctuality, regularity, industry, and silence—those favorite virtues of the nineteenth century urban classroom). But political conflicts over schooling frequently arose over issues more symbolic than pragmatic, contests over which cultural values were to be legitimized through recognition as a valid part of the common school. As David Cohen and Bella Rosenberg note, to search always for a rational economic calculus is to miss the independent cultural importance of controversies over schooling. Think of these contests, they urge, "in the metaphoric terms of theatre. Social action might be grasped in terms of the expressive qualities—feelings, values, and form—'broadcast' to an audience."[1] Of such character were many ethnocultural issues of the nineteenth century: German immigrants pressing to use their language in elementary schools; WCTU members persuading state legislatures to require temperance instruction; and Protestants demanding devotional reading of the Bible in the schools.

Although many social cleavages in the nation could have led to controversy in the schools, some were far more salient than others. The educational implications of divisions by sex and race, for example, bear a number of resemblances, but the actual working out of these implications in educational politics was quite different. Both blacks and females were initially excluded from schools attended by white males; both groups were initially segregated in single-sex or single-race classrooms; both groups were stigmatized as being mentally inferior; after leaving school both groups faced labor markets segregated by sex or race, whatever their degree of education, and both earned, on average, only three fifths as much as white males. But females entered common schools initially by a process of insinuation—taught first in summer schools, or at noon time, or after the boys had left—that constituted a quiet revolution in school attendance, hardly noticed by school policymakers; blacks gained admission to public education in the South only after the Civil War and Reconstruction, and in the North often faced determined opposition from

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whites. In short, coeducation of females came about in an unobtrusive manner, whereas integration of blacks has been and continues to be a matter of great controversy. One reason for the difference is that women come from all socioeconomic classes, while blacks have been pressed down systematically to the bottom reaches of the social order. Since power over school policies has correlated highly with class, access to schooling for females has come far more easily than it has for blacks, and seldom has been so great or open a source of contention.[2]

Different issues aroused far more conflict at some times than at others. As we shall mention, during the nineteenth century, questions of ethnicity and religion took center stage in the politics of education, in part because the common school was an official agency for defining and creating citizenship in ethnocultural terms. As such, the public school was an almost sacred institution, the nearest equivalent in our constitutional order to an established church. Protestants and British-Americans wished to have their culture accepted as quintessentially American, but to gain the support of other groups for public education, they often made concessions, as in the case of German immigrants. Other concessions, such as abandoning the King James Bible owing to Catholic protests, struck closer to the core of the beliefs of many school promoters, and their hostility drove Catholics to build a separate parochial school system. Deep-seated racial prejudice persuaded whites to create a dual school system (when they provided at all for blacks) in the South and to exclude Chinese and Japanese from public schools in California, thereby denying their status as full citizens.

In the twentieth century, ethnocultural issues receded in importance for two reasons. As elites gained greater power to set the agenda of decision-making and engaged in more determined campaigns of Americanization—according to an Anglo-American model—the former power of ethnic wards in cities eroded. And as the merged ideals of business efficiency and educational science dominated educational decision-making, the older contests over religion and ethnic culture seemed irrelevant and anachronistic to those who held power. Instead, they were more preoccupied with preventing class divisions from arousing conflict in schooling and in the larger society.

On the whole, leaders in public education were successful in absorbing, co-opting, or deflecting challenges to the common school, and in gaining acceptance for their myth that schools should be "above politics." They could claim, with some justice, that public schooling instilled common values. This societal consensus, in turn, set limits to competition in other domains and rendered innocuous potentially dangerous social cleavages. One sign of their success in defusing conflict was that the major American political parties, unlike their counterparts in nations like England and Germany, rarely differed substantially about educational policy. And even outcast or deviant social groups who questioned the social consensus—blacks, radicals, militant women—generally believed that improved public education would shorten the road to social salvation.

In this essay we begin by exploring two ways that the architects of public education sought to create consensus: first, by leading a social movement predicated on a Protestant-republican ideology; second, by entrusting decision-

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making to scientific experts buffered from active lay control. The first movement mobilized citizens by appeal to a widely held belief system, while the second transmuted political decisions into matters for professional judgment. Both attempts to create consensus ignored or downplayed the important cleavages of religion, ethnicity, race, class, and sex in American society. From time to time, excluded groups entered school politics. Some potential conflicts were long delayed, and dreams deferred, because people lacked power and political voice. In the last generation, older forms of consensus on public education have eroded and new actors have entered the fold, creating a need to forge a more inclusive and tough-minded social contract between the people and their common schools.

Seeking a Common Ground: Building the System, 1840–1890

"Educate the rising generation mentally, morally, physically, just as it should be done," U.S. Senator Henry Blair told his colleagues in the Capitol in 1882, "and this nation and this world would reach the millennium within one hundred years."[3] Across the nation, in a white schoolhouse planted among the hills of Ashland, Oregon, Alice Applegate sat writing a theme: "Addam was the first man that looked out upon the face of the earth and he was then in the garden of eden. Around him were all kinds of fruit and flowers and in the center of the garden grew the tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil To be continued."[4] To Alice, the teacher (her brother, Oliver Cromwell Applegate), and her schoolmates, the Bible explained and ordered the universe. Twice daily they read the Scriptures aloud. In their textbooks, Christianity merged imperceptibly with republican virtue and Americanism. Economic opportunity seemed a providential reward for the diligent. A divine path led from Eden to a millennial future.

Many educational leaders of the nineteenth century found meaning for their labors in this larger, providential conception that looked both backward and forward. They typically echoed *The Pilgrim's Progress* in their autobiographies (John Bunyan's tale was second only to the Bible in the childhood homes of school superintendents). In obituaries they portrayed one another as part of an aristocracy of character, their worth confirmed not so much by expertise or position as by church membership and commitment to a faith in America as God's government on earth. No one expressed this commitment better than Newton Bateman, Illinois state superintendent of public instruction:

> As the Israelite awaits the readvent of the lost glory of his race, the Christian the dawn of the millennial day, and the millions the coming of that good time when the earth shall be greener and the skies brighter, so we believe in the golden age of schools and teachers. But for this inspiring hope, this vague but indistinguishable faith and longing for something worthier and better, who of us would not be at times willing to drop the oar and in hopelessness to drift any whither?[5]

It takes some effort of historical imagination to reconstruct the context—both material and ideological—within which Americans embarked on their most ambitious and successful institution-building social movement of the

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nineteenth century, the creation of the public school system. Today, when we take for granted the complex bureaucratic structures of schooling, large-scale government, massive cities, an immense industrial base, intense specialization of functions, and pluralism of values, it is easy to forget that mid-nineteenth century America was four-fifths rural, had a miniscule government, a nascent industrial system composed primarily of small firms, and schools that were mostly one-room ventures taught by young, untrained, often transient instructors. It is even harder to understand the world view that gave coherence to the decentralized social movement that produced those schools, scattered across a continent but similar in purpose, structure, and curriculum.

Arriving here after his unsuccessful efforts in the Revolution of 1848, the German immigrant Carl Schurz said, "Here in America you can see every day how slightly a people needs to be governed. In fact, the thing that is not named in Europe without a shudder, anarchy, exists here in full bloom."[6] Foreign visitors in that period, accustomed to the large government bureaucracies of continental nations, their established churches, their surviving feudal institutions, their police and standing armies, were often astonished at the lack of such agencies in the United States. In 1831 there were only 18,038 employees of the federal government, and two thirds of these were in the post office. As late as 1890 state departments of education on the average employed two persons (including the superintendent), or one official for every 100,000 students enrolled in public schools. The U.S. Office of Education was founded in 1867 with a staff of six and a mandate to do little more than collect statistics. Neither federal nor state education officials had substantive powers. The creation and direction of common schools depended chiefly on the actions of hundreds of thousands of local leaders, mostly part-time lay trustees and promoters.

In some respects the spread of common schools across a vast rural nation in the mid-nineteenth century resembled the building of Protestant churches, where local leaders mobilized their fellow citizens by persuading them to invest their money, time, and commitment to realize their common purpose. Similarly, the real impetus behind school building was *voluntary* action in local communities, because state governments, lacking the means to enforce most school laws, could only stimulate local communities to build or improve public schools through fiscal subsidy and persuasion. Per Siljestrom, a visitor from abroad, noted in 1853 that educational promoters relied not on the power of the state but "upon the power of persuasion and on the activity of the people itself, when it shall have been raised to consciousness."[7]

"Raised to consciousness"—that was the key to the common school crusade, as to many other social movements then and since. The consciousness sought by school promoters was not the separatist mentality of a sect, but a consensus that could lead to common action. The reformers of Horace Mann's generation did not believe they were so much discovering new truths as reminding their fellow citizens of moral and civic convictions they all shared. What distinguished the educational reformers was that they took these ideals more seriously and worked harder than most people to put them into effect, to square the society with its professed articles of faith. Like William McGuffey, they genuinely believed that their world view was one that could be shared by all right-thinking

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people, properly reminded (in the case of adults) or instructed (in the case of the young). Their task was didactic: to make sure that all citizens acknowledged the practical dictates of a traditional value system.

The creation of public education in the nineteenth century was based in large part on a belief system that John Higham calls a Protestant-republican ideology, a source of unity in a highly decentralized nation. It had strong millennial elements shared by many of the Protestant sects, a conviction that God had selected America as a redeemer nation: "By giving the millennium a temporal and secular character, the Protestant clergy identified the Kingdom of God with the American Republic; and the Protestant ideology thereupon attached itself to American nationalism."[8] This world view found expression in the motto on the Great Seal of the Republic: *Novus Ordo Seclorum*. The public school, like the churches, was to be the means of building a new order for the ages, of instilling a sense of mission and righteous character in the rising generation. Just as Protestants located salvation in the individual's relationship with God, most school reformers saw good citizenship as individual righteousness. Lord Bryce noted this when he wrote in 1888 that "Americans conceive that the religious character of a government consists in nothing but the religious belief of the individual citizens, and the conformity of their conduct to that belief. They deem the general acceptance of Christianity to be one of the main sources of their general prosperity, and their nation a special object of the Divine favour."[9]

Although the millennial vision of the Protestant-republican ideology gave coherence and resonance to the rhetoric of the common school crusaders, they freely mixed economic arguments with the religious and political case for public education. They were confident that in their providential universe there could be little incongruity between patriotism, godliness, and prosperity. The infectious certainty of the institution-builder fostered an aversion to discord and controversy. Many of the leaders in the common school crusade were only part-time educational reformers earning their livings as ministers, lawyers, politicians, and college presidents and professors. Often skilled rhetoricians, they cast their arguments not in narrowly professional terms but in broadly persuasive language. Their contemporaries deemed oratory to be not only an important art form and commonplace entertainment, but a source also of civil unity, a means of discovering harmony amid seemingly discordant parts. Speakers like Horace Mann, and their sermons calling for a larger loyalty that could dissolve apparent conflicts, were in no small part responsible for the consensus in favor of public education.

School promoters were typically British-American in origin, evangelical Protestant in religion, and bourgeois in economic outlook. Trying to speak for all Americans, they yet wore the blinders of their class, religion, and ethnic background. Intolerant of the Roman Catholic Church, they so alienated Catholics that they hastened the growth of a separate parochial school system. Ethnocentric, they wanted to assimilate foreigners to their own version of Americanism. As citizens near the economic apex of their local communities, they praised the United States as a land of economic opportunity and justice and tended to blame the poor for their plight. The majority of the leaders took their values for granted, assuming them to be the basis of a righteous moral order.

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Conflicts did arise despite the quest for consensus. At stake usually was not disagreement about education and moral training of the young—almost all groups shared a commitment to character formation through schools—but the nature of that schooling. Precisely because most groups believed education was vital, they fought over whose values would be legitimized, whose views would prevail. They generally did not cast issues in economic terms, though clearly the controversies had class overtones. A lawyer in the Cincinnati Bible case described such "status-group competition" succinctly: "In my judgment, the contest is not about religious education at all. It is about denominational supremacy, the right to be higher, to be better, to be more powerful than your neighbor; the right to say to one: 'You are nothing but an unbelieving Jew,' and to another, 'You are the slave of a Roman bishop,' and to both, 'What rights of conscience that a Protestant need to respect have you?'"[10] At issue in the Cincinnati case was the use of the Bible as the basis of moral instruction in public schools. A similar question, arousing great animosity, was the use of public funds to support Catholic schools. And a related, intersecting issue was the use of languages other than English in elementary schools.

In reading the debates over such issues, one is struck by how much both sides talked past each other, perhaps because the values they expressed were so deeply embedded in their own cultures that they believed them to be the only ones reasonable people could hold. Ethnocultural conflicts in education entered the courts for adjudication; they were widely debated in educational and religious associations; they sometimes split political parties; but rarely were they settled authoritatively during the nineteenth century. Few people saw them at the time as issues of constitutional rights. Rather, they were typically regarded as questions of who had the most power. Educators were most apt to accommodate demands when the protesters—like Germans or French wanting their language taught in the schools—had political and economic clout.

Because the common school so rapidly became the mainstream of American education in the nineteenth century, it is tempting to assume that its hegemony was inevitable, to lose a sense of surprise at its triumph. But one can easily imagine a counterfactual history in which the divisions that marked education early in the nineteenth century persisted unabated, and schooling remained as separatist as Protestant churches. Before the common school crusade of the mid-nineteenth century, educational institutions had often reflected differences of class, ethnicity, and religion. To the crusaders themselves it was by no means a foregone conclusion that they would be able to attract rich and poor, Baptists and Unitarians, Germans and Yankees to attend the same common school. Free schools in cities had often been designed for the lower classes and carried a pauper taint. Groups like the Germans in Pennsylvania had kept apart in their own schools for generations. In other English-speaking nations, Protestant denominations had created their own elementary school systems, much as Catholics had done in this country. In the South the common school did not become established until after the Civil War, and then was supported only grudgingly: before Reconstruction blacks were denied formal education, while whites who could afford private schools generally preferred to attend them.

Separatism is one way to avoid conflict. The absence of an established church in the United States had permitted each new group of dissenters to form its own new denomination. Ethnic groups have often preserved their distinc-

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tiveness and avoided conflict with other subcultures by creating their own neighborhoods and even separate communities. People had different tastes in education as in other domains and had been accustomed to buying the kind of schooling they wanted for their children if they had the money to do so. Why then should a *common* school for all walks of life have become the dominant form of education?

As we have said, the common school movement was led mostly by citizens who were notables in their communities, people who both shaped and represented a widespread ideology that stressed civic and moral values that, they claimed, could only be maintained through public education. The nation could fulfill its millennial destiny only if each rising generation learned those values together in a common institution. This was the dominant theme in the rhetoric of consensual persuasion. But they also were canny about framing their arguments and programs to bring possible dissenters into the common school. By stressing the similar elements of faith among most Protestant denominations, they persuaded Protestants to call a truce at the schoolhouse door. By playing on the fears of the prosperous about social instability, and by building palatial high schools for their children in cities, they tried to demonstrate that public education was respectable and a guarantee of order. They assured the people that public schools were a portal to opportunity and a right of citizenship. Arguments of simple practicality convinced many citizens who lived in the highly dispersed communities of rural America that the alternative to a common school was no school at all; there simply were not enough people in such communities to form separate schools by sect or class or nationality. And where compact settlements of immigrants did create public schools in which they sought to retain their language and culture, promoters of the common school were often disposed to look the other way. A county superintendent in Wisconsin, knowing that German settlers were illegally teaching their children in their own language, put it this way:

> Knowing as I do that these Germans keep more school than the Americans, that their children attend more days and that they take a greater interest than do our countrymen, the question presented itself in this manner to me: shall I, by my action, kill these schools, create a feeling against the common school system and cause the establishment of private schools; or shall I take what I can get, knowing that the next generation . . . will work into the English schools entirely?[11]

Americans rarely lacked enthusiasm for education. What the common school crusaders did was to translate the American belief in enlightenment, in moral improvement, in creating a redeemer nation, and in a new kind of citizenship into support for a particular institution, the common school. Not separatism but a consensus based on schooling as a common and public good became an enduring legacy.

The "Educational Trust" and the Transformation of American Society, 1890–1920

As public systems of schooling became firmly established during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and grew in enrollments, financing, and

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bureaucratic complexity, important changes took place in the nature of educational leadership and in the basis of authority in educational decision-making. The older millennial vision of the pioneers was subsumed under a new form of consensus in which management and scientific experts acquired an awesome power: an ability to define what was normal and desirable.

By the turn of the twentieth century, leadership in American public education had gravitated from the part-time educational evangelists of the mid-nineteenth century to a new breed of professional managers, who made education a lifelong career and who reshaped the schools according to the canons of business efficiency and scientific expertise. Equally millennial in their own way, though rejecting or ignoring the theological content of the older millennialism, these leaders believed that science and new organizational arrangements would enable them to manage social progress toward "ever nobler ends." Their purposes were compatible with the older emphasis on moral character, but they were self-consciously modern in desiring to adapt schools to the social, economic, and political changes that had occurred.

Many of these educational leaders believed they had arrived at a point in human history where they could control the course of human evolution; and evolution itself seemed to be a model of cosmic efficiency. Assuming that American society was just and progressive, the new leaders thought they knew how to bring about a smoothly running, efficient, stable social system in which public education was an indispensable form of social engineering. Professional management would replace politics, science would depose public opinion and tradition as sources of authority, and experts would adapt the schools to the vastly changed conditions of modern corporate life.[12]

In this dream, conflict over education would someday be as futile and unnecessary as witch trials; the experts would run things to everyone's benefit. One of the scientists tinkering toward Utopia, Edward L. Thorndike, wrote in 1911 that, because of this rapidly accumulating "knowledge of the science of human nature and its work in the industries, professions and trades, the average graduate of Teachers College in 1950 ought to be able to give better advice to a high school boy about the choice of an occupation than Solomon, Socrates, and Benjamin Franklin all together could give."[13] Like many other educational scientists, Thorndike failed to recognize that his own prescriptions might have cultural or class bias, for they seemed to him based on unassailably objective grounds.

The ideal of scientific management rested on assumptions not only about how to govern, but also about *who* should govern. It was a conception of leadership adapted to the consolidation of power in large and centralized organizations, whether steel mills, large department stores, federal or state bureaucracies, or city school systems. In urban public education the campaign to shift decision-making upward and inward in school bureaucracies, to vest it increasingly in the superintendent and his specialized staff, normally required changes in the political linkages between the schools and the populations they served. In city after city across the nation the new advocates of scientific management (university people and lay professional and business allies) joined forces to popularize a new ideal of corporate management in public education, in which small school boards composed of "successful people" would select

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expert superintendents and delegate to them the task of running the schools in much the same manner as managing a bank or a railroad. To accomplish this goal they had first to destroy the ward school boards, elect members from the city at large, and reduce the size of central school boards. When they succeeded in doing this by changing city charters—which they usually did—they normally blocked the political channels through which the cities' working-class and ethnic communities had traditionally expressed their political interests in education. In the process they also enhanced the power of cosmopolitan elites.

The goal of such structural changes in urban school governance was to turn controversial political issues—formerly decided by large numbers of elected representatives on ward and central committees—into matters of administrative discretion to be decided by experts claiming objectivity. This was, of course, not de-politicization at all; it was another form of politics, one in which authority rested not on representativeness but on expertise.

The decline of lay participation in school governance was part of a larger transformation in the way Americans conducted their public business. As Walter Dean Burnham has shown,[14] in the latter half of the nineteenth century, political parties mobilized tremendous numbers of voters by appealing to issues—especially ethnocultural controversy—that divided the electorate. From 1876 to 1896 almost four in five eligible citizens voted in elections, a rate of participation unmatched in other nations at the time or before or since in the United States. This compares with the Progressive era (1900-16) when less than two in three of those eligible voted, and the period 1920 to 1928, when only one in two voted. Despite much talk about democracy, an increasing number of citizens, the bulk of them at the bottom of the social system, were sufficiently apathetic or alienated to stay away from the ballot box or were actually disfranchised, as in the case of Southern blacks.

During the election of 1896 elites were apprehensive about the possibility that workers and farmers—groups that might have achieved a common class consciousness in opposition to the new industrial and financial leaders—would wage an assault on corporate privilege through the electoral process. That, of course, did not happen, for workers in the urban Northeast repudiated William Jennings Bryan and the Democratic party. The sectional realignment of political parties "brought victory beyond expectation," says Burnham, "to those who [wished to insulate] American elites from mass pressures without formally disrupting the pre-existing democratic-pluralist political structure, without violence and without conspiracy." He argues further:

> It also gave immense impetus to the strains of anti-partisan and anti-majoritarian theory and practice which have always been significant elements in the American political tradition. By the decades of the 1920's this new regime and business control over public policy in this country were consolidated. . . . the functional result . . . was the conversion of a fairly democratic regime into a rather broadly based oligarchy.[15]

The decline in voting and party competition and the submergence of older forms of ethnocultural conflict were accompanied by a significant increase in the size and complexity not only of local and state school bureaucracies, but also

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of federal, state, and local governmental agencies, increasingly managed, as were businesses, by university-trained people. Samuel Hays has observed that there was an upward shift in levels of responsibility for educational decision-making in states and counties: "Professionals with cosmopolitan rather than local perspectives were extremely influential in shifting the scope of interest and level of decision making."[16]

In seeking to "take the schools out of politics," in moving the regulation of education upward and inward in urban and state bureaucracies, and in seeking legitimation for new authority in scientific expertise, the new managers in education were following patterns of action and thought pioneered in the corporate sector of business and in the politically influential professional and trade associations. Within such functional groups there emerged, as Corinne Gilb has observed, "hidden hierarchies" of established influentials who did much to shape both private and public policies in their domains.[17] Within educational policy circles in the universities, the foundations, and in key city and state superintendencies there arose what was called at the time "the educational trust."

Members of this "educational trust" were acutely aware of how changes in the economy had transformed American society. They were worried about the potential for class conflict and eager to use schooling to preserve the existing social order. One of their number, Ellwood P. Cubberley of Stanford, wrote in 1909 that the last decade "was a period marked by the concentration of capital and business enterprise in all fields. . . . 'trusts,' combinations, and associations were formed in all lines of business; the specialization of labor and the introduction of labor-saving machinery took place to an extent before unknown." As urbanization accelerated, "a more cosmopolitan attitude began to pervade our whole life." Small-scale capitalism was giving way "to large mercantile and industrial concerns. No longer can a man save up a thousand dollars and start in business for himself with much chance of success. The employee tends to remain an employee . . . the worker tends more and more to become a cog in the machine and to lose sight of his place in the industrial process." As a result of "the ever increasing subdivision and specialization of labor," he warned, "the danger from class subdivision is constantly increasing."[18]

Recent scholarship has mostly confirmed Cubberley's contemporary portrait of the changes in the economy. Alfred Chandler's detailed studies of the managerial revolution in the leading sectors of corporate capitalism; Daniel Nelson's analysis of changes in the scale of factories and in the organization of work; Harry Braverman's critique of the deskilling of labor and the divorce of the planning of work from its execution; Daniel Rodgers's tracing of the tortured course of the work ethic under these new conditions; and Samuel Haber's study of scientific management—all have probed the far-reaching changes in the social relationships of production.[19] So concentrated was ownership of industry that by 1920 the top 5 percent of all industries earned 79 percent of total corporate income. The major beneficiaries were the wealthy; in 1910 the top one percent of the population received 33.9 percent of all personal income in the United States, while the bottom 20 percent earned only 8.3

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percent. By very high rates of turnover, absenteeism, strikes, and record-breaking votes for Socialist candidates in 1912 and 1920, industrial workers protested the degradation of work into mindless routines and the loss of control over the work process.

How did the new professional school managers respond to this revolutionary transformation of the economy? How did business influence public education? The linkages between educational and business elites and the nature of "influence" are complex, all the more so since both groups worked within a larger culture, many of whose values and structural arrangements they both took for granted. As Thomas Cochran observed, "On the fundamental level the goals and values of a business-oriented culture established the rules of the game: how men were expected to act, what they strove for, and what qualities or achievements were rewarded."[20] This does not mean total consensus or absence of conflict. It does mean that what was not on the agenda—what was not discussed or decided—was often as important as what was, and that business volume became a basis for a new consensus in education and other domains.

From 1890 to 1920 no other lay group had as much an impact on public education as did businessmen. As Charles E. Lindblom has shown, American business was not simply another "interest group" contending pluralistically with other organized segments of society; it was a predominant force.[21] Businessmen were active in the political movement to abolish ward school boards and to refashion urban systems on the corporate model; they and their wives pushed hard for such reforms as vocational schooling and the kindergarten; they served—together with professional people—disproportionately on city school boards; they lavishly supported educational research and educational campaigns like the movement to upgrade education in the South; and their language, techniques, and ideology permeated the new "science" of educational management.

In the nineteenth century, ministers and evangelical lay leaders had provided public education with justification and networks of followers in the common school crusade, thereby tapping into the great reservoir of social energy unleashed by revivalism. In similar ways, businessmen in the early nineteenth century promoted education reform by investing it with their prestige and power, and through organizations such as the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Civic Federation, publicizing the need for change.

The textbook teachings of the nineteenth century common school had undergirded the small-scale capitalism of the time by an ideology that taught that hard work, loyalty, and good character led to success, while poverty and failure were the results of personal defects. The individual and not the social order was on trial. A modest amount of schooling would prepare all for equality in the race of life. In the twentieth century, by contrast, most educators and businessmen agreed that character and the three Rs were not enough; extended schooling (often through the university) led to extended career ladders.

All children, in theory, should be given, through public education, a fair chance to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for success in a specialized, credentialed society. Hierarchy and inequality in the economy were justified by the twin notions of equality of opportunity and meritocracy: if all had equality

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of initial access to schools, then the doctrine of meritocracy—that the best made it to the top—assured the justice of hierarchy. Although many educators were aware of actual inequalities of opportunity in schooling and sought to correct them, they had a vested interest, as did their professional and business colleagues, in advocating the concept of "contest mobility" through education. This form of individual competition was legitimate; other forms of conflict stood outside a consensus that denied differences of class interest.

The literature on vocational education is a fascinating index of the way the new educational managers could perceptively diagnose the severe problems created by the new forms of corporate capitalism and then provide paltry remedies. It also exemplifies their faith in the power of public schooling to correct structural inequities by improving individuals, to reform the society not by direct means but by changing the next generation. Advocates of vocational schooling wrote study after study documenting the ill-paid and deadening character of the subdivided and routinized work available to those on the bottom of the system. They argued that it was so exploitive that child labor should be forbidden by law. But at the same time few suggested any fundamental changes in the character of work for adults or the balance of power in industries, hoping instead that a better system of vocational training would help workers to be more productive and to understand the larger significance of the work they performed.

A particularly revealing reform was the "continuation school," a plan whereby youthful workers would attend schools for four or five hours during their work week. Its proponents made extravagant claims for the power of the continuation school to improve the lives of young workers and to give them opportunities for social mobility and self-help. It was to do this by improving the individual by providing skills, knowledge of the industrial system, and stronger motivation—not by changing the structure of the workplace.[22]

This became a quintessentially American pattern of postponing reform by changing the next generation. The process became familiar: discover a social problem, give it a name, and teach a course designed to remedy it. Alcoholism? Teach about temperance in every school. Venereal disease? Develop courses in social hygiene. Youth unemployment? Improve vocational training and guidance. Carnage on the highways? Give driver education classes to youth. Too many rejects in the World War I draft? Set up programs in health and physical education. Although the impetus for such reforms often came from outside the schools, the faith in schooling was flattering to educators and provided jobs for hosts of new experts. It enabled them to redefine problems in such a way that they could engineer solutions. And it gave concerned citizens the reassuring feeling that something was being *done*—however symbolically—about real problems. In practice, turning real problems—death behind the wheel, the syphilitic body, the frustrated job-seeker—into classroom issues denatured them (though we do not deny that schooling may be part of the solution). As new demands were made on the schools by different constituencies, educators could respond—and often did—by simply adding yet another function. In the process, schools became conglomerates, again paralleling the business sector.

There is abundant evidence that educators were aware of conflicts and cleavages in the larger society in the years from 1890 to 1920. The most

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dramatic were those induced by the rapid pace of industrial consolidation, by changes in the nature of work, by a surge of immigration (especially from southeastern Europe), and by social problems in the teeming cities. School leaders wanted to buffer the schools politically and ideologically from those conflicts, confident that, as experts, they were the best persons to devise solutions. For the most part they were native-born Protestants with small-town backgrounds, enthusiastic Americanizers who assumed that they understood the principles of American society well enough to impose them on immigrants. Finding businessmen to be useful allies in their plans for reform—though sometimes also critics of public education—the new professional managers enthusiastically emulated what they understood to be "business efficiency," assuming that it served all people impartially.

In the mid-nineteenth century, ethnic and religious conflict threatened the consensus that educators sought to achieve. At the turn of the twentieth century, religion had diminished as a source of contention, both because Catholics had created a vast separate system and because changes in school governance had restricted the influence of immigrant groups. But the revolutionary transformation of the economy had sharpened antagonisms between workers and owners, threatening a political split along class lines. Cubberley believed the public school could meet this threat: "The task is thrown more and more upon the school of instilling into all a social and political consciousness that will lead to unity amid diversity." This was, he insisted, "a social consciousness as opposed to class consciousness." Cubberley and most of his colleagues in the "educational trust" believed that the existing political economy was natural and proper and that it was the schools' duty to convey this message. If left free to develop their science of education and program of social efficiency through schooling, educators might one day bring about a nearly conflict-free society. Education was too important a matter to leave to parents or politicians. It was "a phase of political science—that of a study of means of improving the state and of advancing the public welfare."[23] It was a job for experts. Politicians, with their penchant for conflict, need not apply.

The Erosion of Consensus: The New Politics of Education in the Last Generation

Public school leaders today are somewhat like an heir receiving a handsome legacy from a distant relative, who neglected to include in the will instructions for maintaining the bequest. Both nineteenth and twentieth century educational reformers shared an evangelical confidence in their mission, its rightness grounded either in the revelation of God's will or the certainty of expert knowledge. Today, the only certain people are critics who know what is wrong with public schools. School managers are likely now to keep a low profile, out of the crossfire of conflicting demands.

Traveling across the United States one can find school buildings that exemplify this legacy. In a country landscape, the one-room school, with its steeplelike bell tower, remains the symbol of the common school movement of the nineteenth century, reflecting its chiefly rural character, its affinity with the family farm, its unbureaucratic nature, and its Protestant-republican ideology of creating the nation in the hearts and minds of individual citizens. Like a

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church with its Bible, the rural school with its McGuffey Readers was to be a small museum of virtue. Today many of the founders of the fundamentalist Christian Day Schools yearn for the certainties of Alice Applegate in her Ashland classroom.

In the heart of the older cities one can find a symbol of the legacy left by the professional managers of the early twentieth century: the urban high school, often looking like a hard-edged factory with pilasters, visually representing the union of an attenuated traditional culture with a dominant utilitarianism. Planned and staffed by specialists, sorting students into programs that would profoundly influence their life chances, the high school was an archetype of the ideal of social efficiency that dominated the thinking of the new professional managers. Inside one would have found, in 1915, an imposing office for the principal, secretaries busy typing memos and filing reports, a gymnasium and assembly hall, counselors talking with students, and young people in classrooms studying algebra or metalwork or domestic science. The school conveyed an air of certainty then; one knew that it was a portal. Today, run-down and often full of students who have no desire to be there—but no jobs beckoning them either—it resembles a fortress overrun by the very people it was meant to arrange in serried ranks.

And moving to an expanding suburb today, one is not quite sure whether that new, sprawling one-story complex is going to be a shopping and service center or a school. Soft-edged, divided into segments, united mostly by a common parking lot and heating system, both school and shopping center are eclectic in offering something to everybody, blurred in purpose, adapted to an affluent postindustrial middle class. The complex of buildings articulates individual tastes and interests clearly, but what does the whole add up to?

In the past generation the older sources of authority and consensus have been severely challenged. Leaders no longer command either as white male aristocrats of character or as experts. From outside the system angry protest movements have arisen, as groups defined by basic social cleavages of race, sex, and class have become newly conscious of their separate interests, interests they no longer are willing to have the experts define. Protest groups of many kinds have emulated the methods pioneered by the civil rights movement. Within the system a once united professional front has crumbled as teachers, administrators, and other staff have waged internecine battle. Many groups—students, minorities, women, the handicapped, school finance reformers—have found the law a ready instrument for change. Older processes of political accommodation of differences have eroded as aggrieved parties turned to the courts. To meet the needs of underserved students, federal and state categorical programs have proliferated, all demanding new forms of accountability. Webs of regulations and paperwork empires prescribe the forms and processes of schooling, circumscribing the autonomy of local educators, turning many of them into social accountants. Scores of reforms were attempted in the schools, and dozens abandoned. After a generation of kaleidoscopic change, it is little wonder that many educators today are in what Michael Kirst calls "a state of shock and overload."[24]

The ideology of professionalism and the professionalization of ideology in education contributed to this sense of shock and overload. The former taught educators that schools should be above politics and run by experts; in this

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version of social reality, conflict over education was the product of intrusive "interest groups." The latter resulted when older, broad-based rationales for public schooling were narrowed to organizational creeds and professional litanies; this narrowing of the language of justification gave greater coherence to the beliefs of educators but restricted their ability to reach a pluralistic public.

The administrative progressives of Cubberley's generation would have been quite at home among the educational leaders of the early 1950s, most of whom subscribed to their ideal of educational governance as a "closed system." For that matter, Horace Mann would probably have warmed to the portrait of aristocratic character in the school administrators' yearbook of 1952: "It is the superintendent of great heart and courageous spirit, possessed of sound judgment and deep understanding, who will carry the profession and the schools forward. . . . His world will be immeasurably enriched by his service and leadership."[25] In another ten or fifteen years both Cubberley and Mann would have been bewildered, as were their descendants in the educational establishment of the 1960s, by the surge of educational controversy and conflict. Indeed, as Stephen Bailey wrote in 1969, so would the scholars of the 1950s, whose accounts of educational governance seemed "romantically archaic and irrelevant" by the end of the 1960s. Reading the standard studies, he continued, "is a little like studying modern geography with a pre-World War II textbook, and a pre-World War I atlas."[26]

At center stage in the 1950s tales of decision-making were the school board and the superintendent. Troublesome local interest groups sometimes entered the scene but could be deflected or co-opted. In the wings, giving faint signals, was the state department of education. The school lawyer was the person who defended the school board when a child slipped on the school steps and a parent sued the district. Now and then people debated abstractly about the dangers of federal control *if and when* (and it seemed highly unlikely) Congress decided to give federal aid. Yearly the school board discussed in closed session how much of a raise it could afford to give the teachers. Ethnic issues rarely surfaced.

The early 1950s, then, were the end of an era of continuity in the values and institutional elaboration promoted by the administrative progressives early in the twentieth century. The force of the evolutionary vision of Cubberley's generation waned but was not disclaimed by their successors, just as the moral evangelism of Mann's generation had been transformed amid the scientism of the early twentieth century. But the educators of the 1950s had a firm sense of working within a well-established professional tradition. Charles Lindblom's characterization of politics as "the science of muddling through" well describes the development of education in the years from 1920 to 1950, when incrementalism in reform left mostly unchallenged and unexamined the larger framework while concentrating on improving the parts.[27]

In the late 1950s and 1960s, however, new actors in school politics challenged the old order and began to dismantle the closed system of school governance that had evolved over the previous half century. Much of the initial impetus for change came from a series of powerful social movements, that began with the civil rights campaign and gathered momentum after the *Brown* desegregation decision in 1954. Techniques of protest, court action, and new legislation pioneered by blacks and their white allies spread rapidly to disparate

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groups—feminists, Hispanics, the handicapped, Native Americans, and others—eager to achieve greater power and equity by collective action.

These protest movements aimed at ending discrimination or neglect. They based their public appeals for social justice on the kind of traditional egalitarian and democratic ideals that Gunnar Myrdal called the American Creed. Although the demands and techniques of mobilization of specific groups differed, such social movements shared a common faith in education as a means of increasing equality of opportunity. Unlike the earlier common school crusaders, the leaders of protest movements saw themselves not as insiders but as outsiders, as people whose mission was to force the centers of power to attend to their neglected needs. Closed systems of decision-making that had excluded them in the past were no longer acceptable to them.

No one better symbolized the moral force and universal ethical values of the early stages of the civil rights struggle than Martin Luther King, Jr. Urging blacks and their white co-workers to take history into their own hands, he expressed the goal of social transformation in terms that resonated with traditional Christian and democratic values. At the same time, he and his followers led boycotts and sit-ins, organized confrontations with segregated school systems, planned strategy in black churches, and marched on Washington to demand that caste be broken once and for all. These struggles, vividly portrayed in the media, aroused the conscience of Americans. King justified his attack on caste by arguments that could be rejected only by denying mainstream moral and political principles.

As the battle against the Southern caste system proceeded, Northern blacks found powerlessness, deprivation, and institutional racism closer at hand in their own communities. Vincent Harding writes that, in the North in the hot summers from 1964 to 1968, "wherever there was a black community of any significant size, there was some form of open rebellion.[28] Unresponsive and inadequate schooling was high on the list of black grievances. While many black leaders pressed for desegregation, others believed that nothing less than self-determination and control over schools and other institutions in their own communities could counter the pervasive racism of the larger society. Such calls for black power fractured the alliances between blacks and whites that marked the earlier stages of the civil rights movement.

The black protest movement in its many manifestations revealed the contradictions between professed American values and the realities of black lives in white America. It "thrust a wedge deep into the old America," Harding writes, "splitting it along age lines, along class lines, along ideological lines, opening faults within institutions."[29] Similar protest movements by other groups followed the black rebellion in rapid succession, demanding redress and recognition for other dispossessed groups. Protest became an everyday fact of life for leaders in that most universal of American institutions, the public schools.

As we have suggested, educational leaders were ill-prepared by their experience and ideology to cope with basic conflict over school goals, governance, and programs. Forgetting that in the Progressive era of "social efficiency" their predecessors had hoped to engineer a new society, they claimed that their task was "education, not social engineering," and wanted to keep insistent

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"interest groups" (which is how they tended to see protest groups) at arm's length. Seeking to keep the initiative, they tried to redefine issues raised by outcast groups as educational problems whose solution only they were equipped to provide. Thus they labeled the educational needs of minority groups as deficiencies to be remedied by compensatory education, better vocational offerings, and early education programs.

Minority groups increasingly refused to accept the definitions of their problems and the solutions proffered by white experts. Like nineteenth century ethnic groups, minority groups in the 1960s often wanted public schools to legitimize their own cultures; thus blacks often demanded courses in black history and Hispanics pressed for bilingual instruction. A further step in ethnic self-determination was a campaign for community control of schools and the hiring of minority staff.

Mobilizing energy and anger, appealing to idealism and arousing fear, protest groups used persuasion and confrontation to force changes in public education. Liberal reformers in education, the foundations, and government responded with a plethora of programs designed to use education to wage a war on poverty and to increase equity for minority groups. Federal and state legislatures created dozens of categorical programs to serve neglected groups. Funds poured into programs, such as Head Start and Follow Through, designed to equalize educational opportunity by giving special training to underserved children. School districts experimented with new plans for decentralization, community control, and community advisory councils to make governance more responsive.[30]

For all the conflict, the 1960s and early 1970s were heady years. Schools were rapidly expanding to accommodate the population bulge of pupils, funding grew at a rate unparalleled in history, and all kinds of reformers found ready audiences and sponsors. In the early years of the war on poverty it seemed as if the traditional American faith in education had never been stronger. People talked of educational moon shots—the 1960s form of millennial rhetoric. Long-awaited reforms like federal aid to education seemed to promise real solutions to old problems. Issues of racial and sexual justice too long ignored became salient in the public mind as minorities and women commanded attention. Educators, social scientists, and journalists diagnosed educational problems and confidently proposed remedies. Conflict and ferment made public schools front-page news.

The old united front of teachers and administrators broke down as teachers joined the fray with strikes and a new search for power, shattering the older dream of a common professionalism. Teacher unions grew rapidly in the 1960s in numbers and influence, especially in the large cities, while state and local teacher associations affiliated with the National Education Association became more militant in pressing for higher salaries, better working conditions, and control over the educational process. Formerly anathema even to the American Federation of Teachers, strikes by teachers multiplied, while collective bargaining became mandated by law in most of the populous states. Working collectively to press their economic and political demands, teachers split away from administrators. Conflict divided the once-united NEA, and controversy rent a profession that had once prided itself on ideological consensus.

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The new militancy of teachers arose from many sources. One motivation, obviously, was a desire to earn more money. In the expanding economy of the 1960s teachers experienced a sense of relative deprivation when they compared themselves with workers of comparable education. In the increasingly large and bureaucratized school systems of the postwar years many teachers also felt alienated from distant managers and powerless to influence policies unless they banded together in power blocs. Much of the militant leadership in both the AFT and the NEA came from young male teachers in big cities. Well educated and self-confident, they rejected the genteel poverty and bureaucratic subordination that had often characterized teaching as an occupation. The protest movements of the 1960s demonstrated to them that assertiveness and organization paid dividends. Eager to unionize white-collar workers, organized labor provided funds and staff to assist the AFT.[31]

Concurrent with the rise of collective bargaining and political power for teachers was another major new influence on educational decision-making: the use of the courts to shape educational policies. Plaintiffs assisted by public interest lawyers demanded fundamental changes: equalization of state school finance; desegregation; student rights in free speech or due process in suspensions; elimination of institutional sexism; and correction of bias in classification of pupils. Many of these cases clarified constitutional rights long obscured or violated. Recourse to the courts made sound strategic sense for activists who lacked a broad political base but wanted rapid change. Tired with the glacial pace of equalizing school finance by state legislation, for example, a group of cosmopolitan school reformers—public interest lawyers, social scientists, and foundation officials—successfully took their case to the courts in state after state.[32]

New decisions in constitutional law, legislation guaranteeing civil rights (by sex as well as race), and dozens of class action suits in state and federal courts have greatly expanded the sway of law over educational policies. They have also increased the possibility, if not always the fact, of individual litigiousness. This has led to important victories for groups that formerly lacked a voice in policy-making or faced inequitable treatment, and for individuals with specific complaints. Recourse to the courts has its costs, however. It has increased the fragmentation and factionalism that recently have characterized the politics of education. It has placed awesome responsibility in the hands of judges—to make educational decisions—not always wisely exercised, in view of the limited range of legal remedies and the limited time and expertise of the judiciary. The adversarial mode of legal debate has often polarized opinion and exacerbated differences between groups. Thus litigation in education, arising from unmet needs and real injustices, signals a breakdown of other forms of persuasion and a loss of trust among competing factions to settle their disagreements through traditional means such as administrative compromise or legislative or school board actions.

The profusion of federal and state categorical programs has created another form of fragmentation in educational governance. Laudable in their intent to reach the poor, the handicapped, or children with limited proficiency in English, such categorical programs have often brought centralized funding without centralized coordination. The result, writes John Meyer, "is an

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organizational theorist's nightmare, and something of a bad dream for administrative practitioners, who must send and receive a blizzard of reports to and from distinct reporting agencies."[33] To receive such categorical grants, local school districts typically have to create distinct programs for labeled populations, with separate accounting systems for each. Sometimes laws or court decrees have mandated that districts provide services for particular groups under certain conditions—for example, the handicapped in the "least restrictive environment"—while forbidding the "commingling" of other funds (for example, Title I) for those purposes. Similar regulations that bilingual programs be kept separate from monolingual classrooms have led to a concern that children are kept in bilingual classrooms beyond the point of need. Thus the mandate to label children in specific ways in order to receive federal or state funds may inhibit local educators from combining funds to meet the needs of students in a flexible and individualized manner.

The creation of these separate programs, each with its own staff and vertical accountability to the funding agency, has both valuable and questionable consequences. The programs create a constituency and advocacy group for specific underserved populations like the handicapped or bilingual children, but they also result in "*the artificial separation of similar services* across federal programs." School administrators sometimes have to demonstrate that their district is in compliance with inconsistent or even conflicting requirements. The best response in such circumstances, says Meyer, is for the local superintendent "to maintain a posture of incompetence, rather than one of dishonesty."[34] The paperwork empire created by the program accountants thus often has little to do with what actually takes place in classrooms. This is the product not of malevolence but of the structural features of the programs themselves. The most appropriate response, we believe, is not to abandon the goal of reaching underserved populations but to permit greater flexibility to local administrators in devising effective education for them.

Fragmentation of governance, protest movements, splintering and controversy within the educational profession, recourse to courts—all signaled the end of an era when school leaders had hoped that education could remain above politics. In the last generation it has become apparent that basic cleavages in American society—of race, sex, or class—could no longer be papered over in a consensus ideology. No longer were people willing, if they ever were, to let school managers make all the key decisions.

Some people think that the eruption of conflict and the catalogue of controversy we have described has produced a net loss in public education. We do not believe this is the case. Protest movements have illuminated and partially remedied injustices. If our generation has to face the consequences of many generations of racism and sexism, that is not the fault of those protesters who brought the debt to attention. If teachers had to organize and become militant to gain decent salaries and some balancing of power within school bureaucracies, the prize was worth the struggle. If school officials were often blind to the constitutional rights of students, and legislatures deaf to the appeals to equalize school finance, recourse to the courts was justified. In a healthy democracy, values and interests are always in tension; no public institution, least of all common schools, can really be above politics.

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It is easy to forget, as David Cohen and Barbara Neufeld remind us in their essay in this volume, that "the problems we see now are in good measure the result of past educational successes." In the last generation, Americans have demanded that their public schools accomplish the really hard tasks of educating in equitable fashion the children who had all too often been discarded as losers in earlier generations. Indeed, much of the current disillusionment with public education stems from unrealistically high expectations in the years following *Brown*. The great increases in funding for schools, the rise in retention rates in high schools, the abolishment of *de jure* segregation, the dramatic improvement in opportunities for minorities and women in higher education, the increased sensitivity to cultural differences, the multipronged attacks on inequality in schooling—even all these have not brought the millennium. One after another, reformers have promised, like snake-oil salesmen, that their particular panacea would work where others had failed. Social scientists have sometimes added to the confusion and disillusionment. Initially enlisted in the cause of demonstrating inequalities so that schooling could be made more equitable—and hopeful that this in turn would right social injustice—some researchers quickly became discouraged by the meager results of compensatory programs, and declared that schools do not make much difference in people's life chances. Others blamed the schools for not equalizing academic outcomes or even lifetime incomes—claims no sensible person had made in the first place.

Following rapidly in sequence have come overpromising, real—but nonmillennial—gains, and disillusionment. On top of these developments, the late 1970s and early 1980s have become a time of retrenchment and contraction in most school districts. Now hard times will demand hard choices of a kind not customary in our educational history. American public education has traditionally been an expanding and optimistic enterprise. The sense of millennial hope that pervaded educational discourse in the past stemmed in part from the knowledge that American education, like the society at large, was continuously growing in size, in wealth (with the temporary exception of the 1930s), and in scope. Reform in public education has largely come about by accretion, by adding new rooms to the structure, thereby enabling educators to absorb demands for change without much damage to vested educational interests. As a result, American education has been both faddish in details and resistant to change in the large.

Today enrollments are dropping, citizens wage tax revolts, and the news media focus on the pathologies of violence, functional illiteracy, and discord. The real successes of the last generation have been obscured. The politics of contraction is far more contentious than the politics of expansion. Fragmentation and factionalism in governance and a current glorification of the private sector at the expense of the public have made it difficult to forge the sense of common purpose necessary for Americans to make hard choices wisely. In the 1980s the resurgence of privatism, the newborn faith in the market system, the ambivalence of nervous liberals, and the desire to cut back on public services may impel an increasing number of Americans to ask why, if public education is in such a mess, they should support common schools at all.

Historically, and in the present, public education has represented the only commitment by which American society has guaranteed to serve the needs and

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interests of all its citizens. In general, the United States has been very backward in providing public services when compared with other Western nations, particularly those services of a redistributive nature such as health care, child care, housing, and decent support services for the aged. But in the case of public education, Americans have created a free system, the extent and diversity of which at all levels—especially the top—exceeds that of any other nation. Michael Kirst shows in his essay that this traditional support of schools sharply increased during the 1970s. In voting for tax limitation, most citizens have not taken aim at public schools. Although it is true that public confidence in education, as in other major institutions, has dropped in recent years, it has at least maintained its relative rank of fourth place in a list of ten, well above such institutions as the Congress or big business.

Thus those who wish to recreate a community of commitment to public education, as we do, have a base of support to build on, however serious the present challenges may be. Such retrenchment as public education faces does not necessarily entail decline. It is ironic that "excess capacity" is now perceived only as a problem and not also as an opportunity. During most of American educational history, educators struggled to build enough classrooms to house a burgeoning school population and to find enough teachers to instruct them; now that there is a surplus of both school buildings and teachers, observers see only the negative side. We sympathize with those who will lose their jobs, and share concern for the cutbacks in important programs that retrenchment will bring. But the history of education during the Great Depression suggests that substantive reforms can take place in hard times and that retrenchment can force people to decide what is fundamental—not in easy slogans like "back-to-basics," but in building a coherent public philosophy, as in Charles Beard's 1937 statement, *The Unique Function of Education in American Democracy*.[35]

What is necessary now is a basis for common commitment to public education if citizens are to avoid the failure of nerve that will permit public education to atrophy. We have argued that in the nineteenth century there was a broad-based ideology that mobilized people to build a common school system. The crusaders had a sense of working within a resonant and providential view of history. In the Progressive era both the ideology and sense of history narrowed to a rationale for professionalization. In calling for a community of commitment today, we would not try to turn back the clock. It will not do to warm over Mann's rhetoric or reissue the McGuffey Readers. Nor would we want to return to the time when governance was more tidy and hierarchical, when school districts could be described as "closed systems," and when issues of race and class and gender rarely surfaced.

Building a sense of common purpose is more than a way to rescue a threatened institution from decay, for debate about education is really talk about a preferred future, expressed as a particular kind of training for the young. From Plato to Dewey, the best educational theory has also been profoundly political. Decision-making in education can provide a forum for discussing the kind of future we want as a society, not just as individuals. Such arenas for public discourse and action are hard to find. Much decision-making about the economy takes place behind the closed doors of corporate boardrooms or multinational consortia like OPEC. The decline of voting in America suggests

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that almost half its citizens feel they cannot much influence the political system, while resentment against government bureaucracies suggests another expression of alienation. But public schools are everywhere close at hand and open to all children. They generate valuable debates over matters of immediate concern, and offer a potential for community of purpose that is unparalleled in our society. For all their faults, public schools are probably the most responsive public institutions we have.

It may be argued that a quest for community of commitment is mystical, not hard-headed. Instead, the tough-minded friends of public education should simply go about building coalitions of people who have a direct stake in the system. We have two responses to this point of view. The first is that common ideals can in fact have a great impact on real events, as we have tried to demonstrate in our analysis of the common school crusade. The second is that schooling is a public rather than private good, and hence its base of support and governance must extend well beyond those who directly benefit (for example, school employees and students and their families). If education were simply a consumer good—like clothes, a matter of individual taste—there would be little sense in seeking common ground. But the schooling of all affects the future of all, at least indirectly.

Consider the functions of schools in sustaining and extending democracy, a topic much neglected of late, despite the efforts of scholars like Michael Walzer and R. Freeman Butts to give political culture more salience in educational discourse.[36] Democracy cannot be taken for granted as if it were self-generating. The Bill of Rights, for example, was hard-won and is ever threatened. Public schools offer only one means of socializing the young to democratic principles and processes, but they are an essential element. If talk about democracy seems unsophisticated today, that may be itself a symptom of the erosion of civism.

In his essay, which will appear in the next issue of *Daedalus*, Alonzo Crim discusses his work in Atlanta to create a community of commitment. Part of such an effort requires building a coalition of diverse groups—business, labor, churchpeople, parents, educators at all levels. The specific interests of each group may differ: employers may want better-trained and more productive workers, professors more literate students, ministers more moral youth, parents better jobs for their children, teachers more diligent learners. People have always supported public schools for a variety of motives, and in a pluralistic society that is to be expected and applauded. But as Crim recognizes, something more is required than a shifting coalition of people pursuing separate interests. What will furnish morale and stamina for the long haul ahead in public education is the internal coherence provided by shared goals, such as full participation in the polity and economy. If people forget what animates institutions, they atrophy. Amid the conflict and disarray in public education today, a central task for leaders is to reformulate its purposes in a manner tough-minded enough to encourage controversy and pluralism while seeking a common ground suited to our own time and condition.

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Boys Town Center, Stanford University. We are deeply grateful for this support, but our analyses, of course, do not necessarily reflect the policies of these agencies. A fuller exposition of the themes of the essay and supporting documentation and acknowledgements will appear in our book *Managers of the Millennium: A History of Leadership in American Public Education* (Basic Books, forthcoming, 1982).

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Political Coalitions for Public Education

CRITICS OF AMERICAN EDUCATION have been around for a long time, but so have political coalitions in support of education. The former appear to be growing stronger, the latter weaker. That is the melancholy burden of argument of this essay. How new coalitions of support might be formed is examined in the concluding pages, but this examination leads only to what is possible, not to what is inevitable.

Twenty years have passed since the publication of *The Transformation of the School*, Lawrence A. Cremin's prizewinning history of the rise and fall of progressivism in American education. It deserves rereading. Not only does this elegant study serve to remind us of where we have been, but it reminds us also of how much of our current rhetoric about the alleged failures of schooling is simply the most recent incantation of a tired and sullen litany.

Note, for example, Cremin's summary of the indictment of American high schools by the *Commission on the Relation of School and College* a half century ago—"They had failed to convey a sincere appreciation of the American heritage; they did not prepare adequately for citizenship; they seldom challenged gifted students to the limit of their abilities; they neither guided nor motivated their pupils effectively; and their curricula were a hodgepodge of lifeless materials unrelated to the real concerns of young people."[1] Or read Cremin's quotation from Walter Lippmann written forty years ago—"There is no common faith, no common body of principle, no common body of knowledge, no common moral and intellectual discipline. Yet the graduates of these modern schools are expected to form a civilized community."[2] Or note his paraphrase of Bernard Iddings Bell's sweeping indictment of American education of thirty years ago—"The elementary schools had failed to transmit the elemental wisdom of the race; the high schools seemed far more interested in coddling young minds than in strengthening them; and the college, by surrendering to a vague utilitarian mediocrity, had deprived the nation of humanely educated leadership."[3] By the early 1950s, according to Cremin, the attack on the alleged softnesses and superficialities of progressive education—particularly in its post-World War II guise as education for "life adjustment"—had turned into a rout.

Who were these critics of the schools? Cremin reports that some were judged by school defenders to be "sincere," but many were identified as chronic tax conservatives, congenital reactionaries, witch hunters, superpatriots, dogma peddlers, race haters, and last but not least, academic conservatives.

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Reading such words in 1981 causes the nape of the neck to tingle. It is as though the educational clock had stopped with the inauguration of Dwight Eisenhower and had only started to tick again with the inauguration of Ronald Reagan. It is as though television, Vietnam, teachers' unions, parental permissiveness, declining test scores, family disintegration, equality movements, grade inflation, and other factors usually cited as causes or effects of the dire state of contemporary education were but irrelevant shadows, superficial and passing manifestations of infinitely more profound and inertial cultural continuities.

Discontinuities of Condition

There might be no particular reason to remark on rhetorical continuities of criticism were not profound differences between the circumstances of education in the early 1950s (let alone the 1940s and the 1930s) and the early 1980s becoming increasingly, even excruciatingly manifest. Many of these differences, these discontinuities of condition, will be identified in the course of this essay. But the absolutely *fundamental* difference is found in the disintegration of the political coalitions that previously supported K-12 public education in this country.[4] Discontent with the schools in the 1950s, manifested in books like *Why Johnny Can't Read*[5] and James Conant's study of the American high school,[6] was a clarion call for educational improvement, and was associated with the largest explosion of the school-age population in the nation's history. Discontent in the early 1980s accompanies declining school enrollments, and is too often carping and undirected. Even where it *is* directed, it tends to deal with issues—such as lack of discipline or declining test scores—that are often manifestations of societal forces far beyond the control of the schools themselves.

The second transformation of the American school may well be its unraveling in a climate of malignant neglect. Why this dismal scenario is plausible and what forces are at work that might preclude its realization are the subjects of this essay.

Schools, including private schools, exist by the grace of public sufferance and support. These in turn are generalized triumphs of the work of special pleaders. This has always been so. Those who believe that schooling has historically been a self-evident value, an automatic civic beneficence, should reread the chronicles of the turbulent educational struggles of the nineteenth century. The general acceptance of the desirability of universal public education through high school is a recent phenomenon in America's social history. In 1880 only 2.5 percent of eighteen-year-olds were high-school graduates; today that figure is closer to 75 percent. This dramatic shift—most of it occurring in the years since 1925—was not accidental. Massive changes in the economy, new industrial demands, rising expectations of lower-class populations—especially immigrant families—and the insistent urgings of reformers all played their part. But the cutting edge was sheer demography—the persistent and dramatic growth of the nation's total population, from 40 million in 1870 to 200 million in 1970. Even more significant was the growth during that period of *school-age* populations: from 8.6 million in 1870 to 55 million in 1970—a far more rapid rate of growth than that of the population as a whole.

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In a politically responsive system in which the idea of individual and social progress was often linked in the public mind with education, proschool majorities and their spearheading political prophets and coalitions became increasingly commonplace. The emergence of the public high-school system in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the extraordinary extension of public postsecondary education in the twentieth, can hardly be explained without reference to the pressures placed on state and local political systems by an upwardly mobile population. These secular demographic forces in a democratic society seem to me to have been far more insistent causes of educational growth in America than the manipulations of capitalist exploiters or the "collection of democratic altruists, aspiring workingmen, liberal protestants, and urban progressives" often assigned responsibility by educational historians for the growth of schooling in America.[7] It is true that sheer numbers and rising educational expectations can trigger all kinds of contrary political forces. David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot's recent study of the history of leadership in American public education demonstrates that individual crusaders "wore the blinders of their religion, their class, and their ethnic background. But they also sensed a 'public philosophy of education' which gave both educators and lay people a sense of common purpose."[8] Surely, the fundamental basis of this public philosophy was the belief of an increasing number of people in the idea of personal and social progress that could be promoted in part by enhanced educational opportunities.

In the large cities the demands of immigrants and working-class populations for more and better schooling fit into the power interests of machine politicians. Schools not only met an articulated popular demand, they also provided patronage and spoils: teaching jobs, maintenance work, construction contracts. Anyone who has taken even a cursory look at the history of the Boston School Committee, for example, is aware of its long, deep, and continuing involvement in ethnic and patronage politics.

With the turn of the twentieth century, in the wave of reform following the revelations of muckrakers, various self-appointed civic leaders led nonpartisan movements to remake urban school systems, and in so doing, often created independent taxing districts. In keeping with business organization theories of the time, these reformers promoted the development of professionally trained school managers, both superintendents and building principals.

It must not be forgotten that while these developments were taking place, in large stretches of the nation, especially in rural areas, formal education took place in one-room schools, supported at subsistence levels by county taxes. There was little or no administrative superstructure, only a building, a teacher, and a random mixture of young children and adolescents. State education departments were weak—their functions, minimal and perfunctory; the politics of their support, ineffable.

In the first third of the twentieth century, with the coming of the automobile and the bus, the politics of school consolidation began to change both the shape of rural schooling and the educational configurations of cities and of a growing suburbia. The pleas of reformers for bigger and better schools meshed increasingly, if episodically, with taxpayer interests in "economies of scale."

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Coalitions for Consolidation and State Aid

Starting in the 1920s, but achieving their greatest triumphs in the 1950s, political coalitions of friends of education—often spearheaded by teacher associations and local school boards—engineered a major increase in the amounts of revenue available for school support. In a little over a quarter of a century, total school revenues in America quadrupled—from just over $2 billion in 1930 to over $9.6 billion in 1956, managed in large part by doubling the percentage of school costs borne by *state* revenues. In 1930 local authorities bore 83 percent of school costs; by 1956 this dropped to 56 percent, while the state's share rose from 17 to 40 percent.

The intellectual leaders of this profoundly successful political movement were academic scribblers: notably Ellwood P. Cubberley, George D. Strayer, Robert M. Haig, and Paul R. Mort.[9] Looking broadly at the essence of their work over a thirty-year period, it is fair to conclude that their catechism was simple and compelling:

What is wrong with schooling in America?

There are too many ill-equipped and underfunded schools lodged in too many revenue-shy, small, mostly rural school districts.

How does one correct the situation?

Consolidate small schools into larger, better-equipped schools—incidentally reducing the number of school districts.

How does one engineer such a transformation in the face of long traditions of educational localism and the unwillingness of taxpayers in District A to consolidate with neighbors in District B, if such consolidation will increase local taxes in District A?

Shift the additional tax burdens incident to consolidation, new school construction, and program modernization to state legislatures, using the basic argument of fairness—i.e., the state has the constitutional responsibility for insuring at least a minimal educational investment (a foundation) for every child in its jurisdiction.

How can one calculate a minimal fairness?

By insisting on equitable statewide assessments of local properties for tax purposes and by tying additional state aid to evidences of adequate local tax efforts for education.

Who is to spearhead the political pressures needed to get governors and state legislators to move along these lines?

School boards and professional educators: school boards, because their members represent in many communities a politically significant "disinterested" leadership; professional educators, because they are numerous and will benefit directly from increased resources. Both groups can be counted on to elicit the assistance of activist parents.

The prototypic successful coalition was the New York Educational Conference Board. Created in the 1930s by the combined energies of the secretaries of the New York State School Boards Association and the New York State

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Teachers Association, the Conference Board was modeled after a highly successful coalition of farm organizations. At its height the New York Educational Conference Board included most of the major educational interest groups in the state: New York State Teachers Association, New York State School Boards Association, New York State Conference of Parents and Teachers, Public Education Association of New York City, New York State Citizens Committee for the Public Schools, New York State Association of District Superintendents of Schools, New York State Council of School Superintendents, New York State Association of Secondary School Principals, and the New York State Association of Elementary School Principals. Conference Board leaders, concerned with the destructiveness of the frequent misunderstandings between school boards and school teachers over local taxes and expenditures for education, saw additional state aid as the solvent of such disputes. "Additional state aid could help satisfy teachers demands without imposing impossible fiscal burdens upon local school boards."[10]

Less sophisticated and less elaborate coalitions developed in other states, but the general movement was clear: school children would be helped by school consolidations and by state-mandated "tax equalization" and "foundation" policies.

In sum, by the middle of the twentieth century, coalitions of politically sophisticated activists working at the grass roots and at state legislative levels were an increasingly impressive force in inducing increased revenues for the nation's public schools. The prosperity and the baby boom of the post-World War II period provided a wind at the back of the activists, and made it easier for private and parochial school parents to carry the burdens of an expanding number of nonpublic schools. But not everyone benefited. Blacks and poor whites in many rural and urban areas were shortchanged. Suburbs did better than central cities. Nationwide, however, the general momentum was unmistakable.

After World War II this momentum could be seen increasingly at the national level. A politics of education that traditionally had been a state and local phenomenon suddenly was on its way to becoming federal. The reasons are not hard to find. World War II had a devastating effect on America's schools. It created a massive teacher shortage. As early as 1942 one hundred thousand teachers had already entered the armed forces, and as the war continued, additional tens of thousands left teaching for higher paying jobs in the defense industry. By 1943 the National Resources Planning Board estimated that at least $2.3 billion would be needed to eliminate school-building deficiencies and shortages caused by the priorities of the war economy. And that many of the 5 million young men declared unfit for military service had been rejected for educational reasons awakened public interest in the condition of schooling in America.

When the war ended the teacher shortage continued. Postwar enrollments in teachers colleges were 20 to 50 percent below the number that could be accommodated. Liberal arts college students interested in teaching careers dropped from ten thousand in 1941 to thirty-seven hundred in 1946.

These startling realities stimulated the growth of national educational conferences and coalitions. In 1946 a National Council for the Defense of Democracy through Education was created under the auspices of the National

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Education Association. In that year a bipartisan group in Congress began to form to promote federal aid to education. Benjamin Fine's annual *New York Times* survey on the condition of American education dramatized the overcrowding in the schools and the drastic teacher shortages. These articles were among many stimulants to the creation in 1949 of a National Citizens Committee for Better Schools and a midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth. In 1950, for the first time, an American president, Harry Truman, called for federal aid to education by grants to the states. As the postwar baby boom began to be felt in every local school district in the nation, the national character of the school crisis became increasingly evident. By 1952 more than five thousand citizen groups had been formed in all parts of the country for the purpose of supporting public education. *Why Johnny Can't Read* became a best seller. Unprecedented alliances were formed. In 1953, for example, the National Association of Secondary School Principals joined with the National Better Business Bureau in forming a Council for the Advancement of Secondary Education—granted that an important agenda was the improvement of economic education.

A White House Conference on Education in 1955, sponsored by President Eisenhower and chaired by Neil McElroy, president of Proctor and Gamble, drew 2,000 delegates representing forty-eight states and five territories. Since in many ways this conference epitomized the most comprehensive proschool coalitions in the twentieth century, it may be useful to identify who came. One third of the delegates were educators and two thirds were lay citizens. Each state and territory was allowed to send delegates in proportion to population, with an assured minimum of ten delegates. Two hundred eighty-three national organizations interested in education were also invited to send representatives. President Eisenhower was honorary chairman of the steering committee. The more than thirty working members of the steering committee represented an impressive cross-section of American civic, economic, news media, cultural, and political leadership.[11] Although many of the policy dividends of this unprecedented, broad-gauged national conference took a decade or more to be realized, the importance of the 1955 White House Conference on Education as a symbol of public concern about, and support for, education is without parallel in our nation's history.

Sputnik *and Federal Aid*

In 1957 *Sputnik* shocked the American people into a realization of the importance of education to the nation's security. This led to the passage of the National Defense Education Act, the first major federal investment in precollegiate education since the vocationally oriented Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. In the early 1960s, under the leadership of two education-oriented presidents, Kennedy and Johnson, federal interest in education exploded, culminating in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. President Johnson, calling himself "*the* Education President," reflected a broad consensus, as well as echoed the sentiments of Horace Mann and other reformers of the nineteenth century, when he referred repeatedly to education as the ultimate solution to all

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of our major problems, including national security, poverty, economic growth, and racial inequality.

But in many ways Johnson was as much an effect as a cause of the explosion of federal educational policies in the mid-sixties. The pressures exerted by local educational authorities on state legislatures for financial aid to education created an upward displacement effect on the federal government. National associations of educational professionals, as well as state and local governments, increasingly pressed for general federal aid to education. By the early 1960s a number of such associations and governments were calling for a one-third local, one-third state, one-third federal assumption of the burden of funding schools.

The story of how the attempts by shifting coalitions to secure general federal aid to education were repeatedly dashed on the rocks of the three "Rs"—race, religion, and red (for federal control)—has been told elsewhere.[12] With the defeat of President Kennedy's attempt to find an appropriate formula for federal funding, some scholars threw in the towel, arguing that the national religious and racial divisions were so deep, and the fear of federal control of education so widespread, that no profederal aid coalition could possibly engineer a general-aid breakthrough in the twentieth century.[13] Yet within three years a major federal aid-to-education bill (the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) *was* passed—granted that it was addressed to improving the education of the poor rather than to the support of schooling generally.

As a result of NDEA, ESEA, and subsequent federal policies, federal assistance to education jumped from a half billion dollars in 1958 to more than $6.5 billion in 1978. Even in constant dollars (1977-78 base), the increase was sixfold. The percentage of federal support vis-à-vis state and local revenues for education doubled in this period.

The effective political coalitions behind this dramatic increase of federal support for education have already been suggested. In tactical terms, the major tribute for ESEA must go to Frank Keppel, who, as Commissioner of Education from 1963 to 1966, patiently worked out the necessary compromises to ensure that the divisive struggles of the past between Catholic leaders and the National Education Association were blunted by judicious bill-drafting.[14] But Keppel was operating within a framework of widespread support for federal aid. The essential coalition was made up of educational associations, organized labor, state and local governments and their related professional associations, foundations, reform groups, religious organizations, and a variety of specific interests that were likely to benefit directly from increased educational expenditures (e.g., publishers, audiovisual equipment industries, sporting goods companies). And all of these were riding on the crest of a wave of public demand and public expectation as the postwar baby boom surged through the education system.

The Fiscal Equalization Movement

By the late 1960s and early 1970s another force for increased school expenditures became manifest, this time at the state level. The issue was equalization of expenditures for schools. In the entire history of educational finance there has been no real parallel to the impact of the handful of academics and public interest lawyers who in a ten-year period stimulated a major

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revolution in spending for education. Some of the key names were Arthur Wise, Charles Benson, John Coons, William Clune, Stephen Sugarman, James Kelly, James Guthrie, Betsy Levin, and Joel Berke.[15] Often working with foundation support (especially the Ford Foundation), these scribblers and reformers led a movement that in state after state induced courts to rule that unequal school expenditures based on wide disparities in taxable wealth violated the equal protection provisions of federal and state constitutions. The scribblers and reformers were soon joined by civil rights groups, public interest lawyers committees, the League of Women Voters, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and other public and private associations interested in correcting past disparities in educational opportunity.

The net effect of this movement was to increase state expenditures for education, sometimes dramatically. Michael Kirst reports that during the 1970s the school-finance reform movement could claim impact in twenty to twenty-five states that contained about 60 percent of the nation's pupils. By 1977 California alone had appropriated $4.6 billion over a four-year period in its attempt to comply with the state court's decision in the famous *Serrano* case.[16] Unfortunately, the backers of the movement never addressed the underlying question of how fiscal equity, by itself, could improve the *quality* of schooling.

Toward the end of the decade the finance-reform movement slumped considerably, partly because the fiscal condition of the states declined in the late seventies. In a perverse way the movement may have undercut the enthusiasm of politically powerful middle-class interests for increasing educational expenditures at the state level—expenditures that appeared to represent higher taxes levied on, and with a relatively lower direct benefit to, well-off suburbanites. Coalitions grounded solely in equity concerns can often end up losing the support of the more affluent parts of the society, thereby causing the unraveling of larger general-purpose coalitions. Such may have been the case in the field of school finance reform during the past decade. Too great a burden of blame, however, must not be placed on the school finance reformers, who were only one eddy in a churning, muddled stream.

The Unraveling of the Proschool Coalitions

From the late 1960s to the present the only sustained political coalition for education at the national level has been the Committee for Full Funding of Education Programs. Staffed by a remarkable and experienced congressional tactician, Charles Lee, the committee has been energized by a coalition of representatives from NEA, AFT, the Impact-Aid lobby, and Washington-based higher-education associations. This coalition was created as an "Emergency Committee" in the late 1960s when, because of the fiscal demands of the Vietnam War, a substantial gap developed between authorization and appropriation levels for federal educational programs. The Emergency Committee was established to narrow that gap by judicious in-fighting during annual appropriation struggles in the Congress. Although the Committee for Full Funding has claimed up to 250 contributors, its associational and institutional membership has fluctuated widely, and only a handful of organizations have been seriously

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involved in its strategies. Its heyday was during the Nixon Administration, when it often served the interests of a Democratic Congress faced with the contrasting values of a Republican president. The passage of time, the creation of the Congressional Budget, and current fiscal stringencies have complicated the committee's life. It was given a temporary impetus by the first Reagan budget, but the dramatic victory on budget ceilings in May 1981 was in some ways a reflection of the committee's changing status. Its declining fortunes are in large part symbolic of the more general dissolution of national political coalitions for education in the past decade and a half.

At the state level, proeducation coalitions have come and gone, becoming ever fewer in the past decade and a half, and their membership increasingly limited in scope.

The unraveling of the coalitions of proeducation activists at both the federal and state levels from 1965 to 1980 was the consequence of a wide variety of interdependent factors, many of which can be identified, but their appropriate weighting and precise interactions are impossible to assess.

Demography—If the baby boom was a powerful wind at the back of proschool forces in the 1950s and 1960s, its end in the 1970s was a depressant. In addition, the general aging of the population over the past decade has increased substantially the number of citizens who have no immediate personal stake in the condition of schooling. Older people tend to vote against increases in educational expenditures. This aging of the population as a whole will continue and may constitute an important aspect of any negative coalitions of the future. The impact of demography will, of course, vary from region to region within the United States.

Tax Revolts—There was an extraordinary growth in the late 1970s of spending-and-tax-limitation lobbies. As Michael Kirst points out, these lobbies were not formed on an isolated state-by-state basis but are manifestations of an interstate lobby network that sponsors and promotes its issues in a wide variety of forms.[17] Spearheaded by the National Tax Limitation Committee located in New York, and the American Tax Reduction Group in California (the groups disagree on some fundamental matters, but they share a "smaller government" philosophy), the spending-and-tax-limitation networks have developed a highly sophisticated dissemination strategy. According to Kirst, their staffs provide assistance on strategy, tactics, and technical matters to state-level organizations and legislators.

Kirst accounts for the success of such groups in the past few years in this way:

> A Louis Harris poll found that 71% of the people do not believe they are getting "good value for their money from their tax dollars." State and local expenditures during the past decade have risen at an average annual rate of more than 14%. The fastest growing taxes have been state and local taxes, going up from 0.6% of national income to 2.5% in the last thirty years. The school-finance reform movement was adding significantly to this spending. California spent billions in its initial attempt to comply with *Serrano* in 1972. But this was ruled insufficient by the State Supreme Court. In 1977 California appropriated $4.6 billion over four years to comply with the Court's decision.[18]

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The Vietnam Legacy—It will be years, perhaps generations, before the true impact of the Vietnam War on national attitudes can be assessed. But that it widened the generation gap, undermined traditional attitudes toward authority, and was a prime factor in producing the devastating inflation of the 1970s is beyond question. All these forces have loosened the bond of community—of common value—that in the past made proschool coalitions viable. If adults are alienated from the young, there will be a diminished sense of commitment to their welfare and growth. If young people are alienated from their elders, deference to authority will dissolve and, again, intergenerational misunderstandings will increase—with a commensurate loss of enthusiasm on the part of older people for paying additional taxes for a system seemingly out of control. Inflation is fear-producing and the enemy of public-spirited altruism.

Civil Rights Movements—The social traumas associated with withdrawal from the "drug" of racism are rarely acknowledged, but they are observable and profound. Sensitive analysts of American culture, like Joseph Schwab, believe that the American majority has a psychic need for an underdog—a need parallel to that found in the class-and-caste arrangements in most of the rest of the world. But the language of American political theory is grounded in the concept of human equality. When governments, as authoritative and inherently punitive allocators of value, impose doctrines of equality on a people reluctant to forgo the ego satisfactions of discrimination, the strain on the sense of community is bound to be awesome. When a major point of enforcement is the schools, coalition-building in support of education becomes difficult indeed. The quarter century since *Brown v. Board of Education* has witnessed a number of successful desegregation efforts. But in most of America's larger cities, desegregation by busing seems to have been a factor in a massive middle-class (mostly white) flight to the suburbs. It has also stimulated an increase in private school enrollments, and it appears to be a major factor in the increased political interest in voucher programs and tuition-tax-credit schemes that would enhance parental and pupil choice of schools. Coalitions in support of public schools are difficult to create and sustain in places where substantial numbers of people are attempting to escape the yoke of constitutional obedience. When educational civil rights are extended to the handicapped, as they have been under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and by Public Law 94-142, competition for the use of the education dollar increases, and community consensus is further disrupted. In many areas of the nation, controversies surrounding bilingualism have further eroded the matrix of coalition-building. In short, as in so many other fields in our national life, single-issue politics has in all too many cases been substituted for coalition politics.

The Urban Fiscal Crisis—In the large cities of the nation, civil rights issues cannot really be divorced from the secular crisis in the funding of municipal services. In most of America's major metropolitan centers, education finds itself in stark competition with other essential services. The older cities of the Northeast have been particularly troubled. Mass transit, garbage and sewage disposal, police and fire protection, public health and welfare services, public works, criminal justice—these and other essential, but fibrilating, aspects of city governments have been in competition with schools for inflated dollars derived from a declining tax base. Coalitions in support of schools tend to be far

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more successful in an atmosphere of incremental, rather than decremental, municipal budgeting.

Teachers' Unions—One of the hallmarks of the coalitions that succeeded in bringing increased financial support to schools in the forty-year period after 1935 was the apparent unity among educational professionals. However denigrated teachers may have felt in educational associations largely dominated by principals and superintendents, that various kinds of professionals *could* come together within the National Education Association and state education associations demonstrated that school professionals were a team. During the 1960s and early 1970s the team dissolved, and the teachers divided into two national unions marked by bitter rivalry. Whatever gains have accrued to teachers in terms of salaries, fringe benefits, and working conditions as a result of unionization (and the gains have been many), teacher militancy and union rivalry have split traditional proschool coalitions and hardened public and taxpayer attitudes toward what in an earlier time had been considered a safe and subservient profession. Teacher strikes have raised the dignity and autonomy of teachers, but they have also lowered the reservoir of public support for educational expenditures. A 1980 Gallup poll showed that 52 percent of the public believed that teachers should not have the right to strike.

Evaluative Research—Beginning with the Coleman Report in the mid-1960s, there has been a substantial amount of scholarly research in the United States that seems to demonstrate the limited effect of schooling on achievement and income in later life and the failure of major federal educational programs to improve learning among targeted populations.[19] Some of this research has suffered by translation into the popular simplifications of the news media; some from inadequate tools of measurement and from the immaturity of frontier intellectual activity. But the net effect in the late sixties and early seventies was to cast doubt on the effectiveness of schools and on the ability of publicly funded educational remediation programs to make a positive difference. Research aimed at truth-telling has often ended up as a disheartening caricature of reality. More recent research based on empirical observation of the schools is emerging with more positive conclusions, but images of past research still linger.

Growing Role of the Media in Public Perceptions of Education—In the past two decades, education has become "newsworthy," a result in part of President Johnson's early priorities, the contentiousness surrounding civil rights and teacher strikes and the coverage of such educational events by TV and radio, the heightened public interest in education during the years of the baby boom, and the inherent newsworthiness of declining test scores and the various revelations of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. But few journalists have been trained in education reporting. Quiet progress in education does not make news; raucous conflict and humiliating failures do. Surely, some of the loss of public support for education has been caused or abetted by the colorful, but often simplistic, coverage of educational matters by the media.

These, then, were some of the forces at work in the late sixties and seventies that dissolved previous coalitions of proschool advocates and made new coalitions difficult to create. In actuality, the list can easily be extended to

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include the growing competition between precollegiate and postsecondary education for public support; the changing character of the family and the work force (e.g., working mothers have less time to interact with school teachers and administrators, and less stomach for PTA meetings and service on local school boards); and increasing controversies about the appropriate federal role in education. Controversies about the appropriate federal role tend to divide those who see an additional categorization of federal grants and a tightening of federal regulations as instruments for promoting equity, from those who believe that the federal presence is benign only in the form of tax credits, general aid, or block grants that leave substantial discretion to state, local, and private education authorities and individuals.

Looking ahead, it is easy to become increasingly pessimistic about public support for the common schools. Major signs, especially continuing inflation, current tax revolts at the state and local level, an aging population, and an increased interest in voucher schemes and federal tuition tax credits all point to a reprivatization of educational services and to fewer public resources for education generally. The logical result of these trends is unsettling, to say the least. At the end of this road may well be ghettoized schools for the urban poor, non-English-language schools for Hispanics, racially pure schools for the bigoted, religious schools for the devout, and for the well-off, a wholesale reversion to the private academies of the nineteenth century. It is difficult to see how any coherent value consensus in the society at large could possibly survive such fragmentation of educational programs, institutions, and support systems.

Toward a New Coalition

These dismal scenarios are, of course, not inevitable. But if the proschool coalitions of the recent past are dissolving, are there signs that new and reasonably broad-based coalitions are in the making? If not, are there indications of emerging *pre*coalition forces or concepts that might in the near future catch the imagination and the allegiance of diverse interests? In short, are there harbingers of a positive "second transformation of the school" that might give hope to those who now see their basic educational faith under impossible strain? There are tantalizing hints that new coalitions are possible and might well be catalyzed by unfolding social and economic realities. There is much we do not know and cannot know about the remainder of this troubled century, but there is much that can be surmised with varying degrees of probability.

First, current demographic patterns and projections assure in many parts of the nation an increase in elementary school enrollment by 1984. With this will come an increase in the number of adults concerned with the condition and quality of schools.

Second, the greater numbers of families in which both parents work will exert additional pressures on the community, including the schools, to provide surrogate homes for children that provide both safe and constructive environments. The awakened interest of working parents in day-care centers is evidence of the need for such surrogate homes. The custodial functions of schools may well receive a new burst of parental attention and interest in the years ahead.

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Third, in an unsettled, but inflationary, economic climate, tax credits sufficient to induce a substantial number of parents to transfer their children to private schools may be too costly for a federal budget already under severe strain. Further, voucher proposals may well turn out in practice to present grotesque administrative problems. The potential negative consequences of these experiments may ultimately induce people to stop looking for escape mechanisms and instead to coalesce to improve the common schools. Failing this, the public system in sheer self-defense may have to develop some as yet unforeseeable coalitions with tuition-tax-credit and voucher proponents to claim an essential part of a diminishing pie.

Fourth, wholesale tax-and-spending reduction movements like those in California and Massachusetts can be carried only so far. As the public becomes increasingly aware of what a substantial loss of public services can do to the quality of life, steps will inevitably be taken to increase expenditures for necessary public functions, including education. For example, one of the most successful examples of collective action by proeducation forces at the state level during the past few years has been the "Tuesday Night Group" in California. In many respects, TNG is a state counterpart to the Committee for Full Funding at the national level. "Comprised primarily of old-line education groups and big-city districts, the TNG focuses on fiscal issues and eschews substantive matters that would inevitably lead to conflict."[20] TNG is credited with minimizing the predicted dire impact of Proposition 13 on the schools.

Fifth, economic necessity may drive the AFT and the NEA together. They have frequently worked together on specific legislative issues at both the state and federal level. In the recent political history of states and the federal government, both have demonstrated the power of organization in influencing elections and determining public policy. Both NEA and AFT have suffered from divisiveness and from a growing alienation between teachers on the one side and potential friends on the other. If they can find other areas of cooperation and can work together on cultivating public support, they can become energizing forces in the development of local, state, regional, and national coalitions whose major purpose is the improvement of the condition and quality of American education.

Sixth, American business and industry have a vital stake in the health of American education. The industrial retraining of high-school dropouts or graduates is an expensive proposition. Poor schooling may be an important aspect of the nation's decline in economic productivity. As this connection becomes manifest, the business community may well increase its attention to schooling. In February 1981 a group of the top companies in California joined with educational leaders to discuss the plight of public education.[21] Such conferences may well spring up in other regions of the country in the months and years ahead.

Seventh, the increasing number of minorities (specifically black and Hispanic), their desire to move into the mainstream of middle-class American life, and their growing political sophistication may well—at least in certain areas of the country—become major forces in inducing political leaders to increase the resources available for education. Over the next decade the proportion of school-age blacks and Hispanics to whites at the same age level will increase dramatically.

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Eighth, the movement to establish and enforce minimum-competency requirements for high-school graduation in the late seventies—although simplistic in some ways—is evidence of a growing public concern with the educational outcomes of our schools. This movement is ongoing.

Ninth, a number of foundations, professional associations, and professional scholars are at present conducting studies about elementary and secondary education—possibly indicating the beginning of a new commitment to educational improvement.[22]

Finally, there are a large number of educational officials at all levels of government who are deeply involved in educational problems and who have direct lines of communication to top policymakers in both the legislative and executive branches of government. These officials are, of course, subject to the policy directives set by these popularly elected executives and lawmakers. But they and the myriad professional and interest group associations that work intimately with them are now major forces in the society. More than dependent variables, they are initiators and monitors of policies and programs. They and their legislative allies (including legislative staff) are important parts of the policy infrastructure of modern governance. Their personal and professional status is associated with the general fate of education in the nation. They are consistently available as potential partners in new coalitions in support of schools.

Whether these various signs and forces will in fact add up to new coalitions of support for schools (and, if so, *which* schools), only the future can tell. Contrary indications preclude optimism. On the other hand, there are sufficient signs of an overarching and growing public concern about the state of the nation generally to suggest at least the possibility that education may once again be viewed as a major long-range instrument of national security, economic growth, and social stability. For example, the state of the voluntary armed services and their inability to attract personnel able to handle the complex machines of modern warfare are realities that will not soon go away and that have direct implications for educational policy. That the Soviet Union is evidently far more rigorous than the United States in insisting on advanced work in science and math as a secondary school requirement has become a topic of discussion at the highest levels of the American government. On the economic front, the Japanese are outproducing the United States in part because Japan requires that its pupils spend longer hours in school and do more advanced work in math and technology-related subjects than American students. Michael Kirst reports that "Japanese children work much harder on difficult academic tasks than their American counterparts. Japanese children attend school about 225 days [each year] while California children are in school 180 days."[23] If appropriate links can be proved between a better education and technological prowess, schools in this country may well receive a new burst of attention. How long it will take the nation's top leadership to see education once again as a key investment in America's future, no one can tell. But it would be strange indeed if some rising politicians in the next decade, recognizing the instrumental effect of education for the nation as a whole and its patent relationship to the broad national interest, did not begin the process of coalition-building toward greater public support for education. A similar tendency could well develop at the state and

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local level, as interstate and regional competition develop to attract new industry to particular locations. A well-trained and highly educated population is a major asset in attracting new industry and new services to any geographic area.

Growing social pathologies in the nation—crime, divorce, drug abuse, urban ghettos, racial and ethnic conflict—prompt the search for solutions. The need to rescue education may, in the light of such pressing social problems, seem slight, but it is oftentimes the only source of long-range hope. Thus, in addition to specific factors that might stimulate the formation of proeducation coalitions in various places and among various groups around the country, there are, in fact, nationwide concerns that might well refocus public policy on the importance of improving educational services. It seems clear, however, that whatever coalitions of support for schools are formed in the years ahead, the context of coalition-building will differ markedly from the past.

Demography will not be a tail wind but a head wind. Many groups and interests will be searching for reprivatization of education and will avoid political coalitions devoted to public-school issues only. Furthermore, with the projected diminution of federal control, increased authority will be returned to the states. And with decremental budgets the rule, state coalitions will have their work cut out for them. In many cases they will compete with other states and municipal services also faced with punitive fiscal constraints. In some states like New York there are signs that the governor and state legislature are becoming increasingly preoccupied with *total* state aid to localities, and are thus increasingly reluctant to mediate among contending local claimants. Carried to its logical extreme, this trend would make educational coalition-building a largely local and bruising activity. Perhaps most unsettling of all, new coalitions will have to deal with the searing political problem of how to form coalitions around imprecise, multiple, and often competing educational goals—for the central dream of perpetual social progress and individual fulfillment that once informed the great educational coalitions of the past, and the idea of a common school that would give everyone an equal chance, are no longer predominant features of America's ideological landscape. A 1980 Gallup poll suggests that the decline in the rating given to public schools has come to a halt, and that public schools are now held in high regard relative to other public institutions. But there is little evidence of a clear vision of the functions and purposes of public schooling, and there are increasing signs that small and local minorities wish to dominate school curricula and materials. Current battles over sex education, environmental education, tuition tax credits, creationist versus evolutionary theories, bilingualism, busing, mainstreaming for the handicapped—to name a few contentious issues—suggest that single-issue politics has also hit the schools. "Basic skills" seems to be the only center of real agreement, and even here there are enormous differences about what these words really mean.

Some recent attempts to make broad-based national political coalitions for public education fly have either not gotten off the runway (i.e., the NEA-sponsored National Trust for the Public Schools) or have taken off solely to shoot something else down. The National Coalition for Public Education (formerly the National Coalition to *Save* Public Education) has a substantial

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membership from liberal and labor organizations,[24] but it has solely concentrated on defeating tuition-tax-credit legislation. Furthermore, its "lib-lab" composition has tended to deprive it of the kind of support from business, industry, agriculture, the news media, and prestigious professions that were so prominent an aspect of the White House Conference of 1955. NCPE can perhaps extend its membership base in the years ahead, but it will have to transcend its present negative crusade and find points of ideological linkage with those concerned with the relationship of education to larger issues of American culture, prosperity, and security. In the immediate future, premature attempts to form large-scale educational coalitions will certainly fail. Such coalitions may have to be preceded by far less formal colloquies of concern—colloquies involving a diverse assembly of groups with quite varying intermediate agendas, but that share anxieties about the consequences of an unredeemed educational system and an underfunded public sector generally.

One thing is clear. The builders of new proschool coalitions must be more than journeymen politicians responding to majority pressures. They must be artisans—perhaps artists—who can see education's place in the national tapestry, and who can weave local and parochial interests, as well as the nation's golden (if tattered) thread of *noblesse oblige*, into an original and compelling grand design.

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[11]The Committee for the White House Conference on Education consisted of thirty-eight individuals. In addition to President Eisenhower, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the U.S. Commissioner of Education as honorary officers, the committee included the president of Procter and Gamble; the Connecticut State Commissioner of Education; a past-president of the General Federation of Womens' Clubs; the president of the National Congress of Parents and

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Teachers; the Undersecretary of the United Nations; the president of B. Altman & Co.; the president of the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune;* the president of Michigan State University; the vice-president of Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation; the president of International Machinists; an editor of the *Ladies Home Journal;* the president of the George Peabody College for Teachers; the president of the *Houston Post;* a past-president of Wellesley College; the president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology; a past-president of the American Farm Bureau Federation; an ex-governor of Maryland; the president and director of Time Inc.; the president of Local 300, UAW-CIO; the principal of Mamaroneck Senior High School; the assistant director for the Department of Education, National Catholic Welfare Conference; president of the Citizens Trust Co.; the chairman of the board, Sylvania Electric Products; the president of Government Affairs Foundation, Inc.; the master of the National Grange; chairman of the board, Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.; the New Orleans superintendent of schools; the first vice-president of the National Education Association; the president of Wabash College; a judge from the U.S. Court of Appeals; a past-president of the National School Boards Association; chairman of the board, Minneapolis-Honeywell Regulator Co.; the State Commissioner of Education of Colorado; and the president of the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers.

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[24]American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; American Association of School Administrators; American Civil Liberties Union; Americans for Democratic Action; American Ethical Union; American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees; American Federation of Teachers; American Humanist Association; American Jewish Congress; Americans United for Separation of Church and State; American Vocational Association; Baptist Joint Committee of Public Affairs; Childrens Defense Fund; Council of Chief State School Officers; Council for Educational Development and Research; Council of Great City Schools; Labor Council for Latin American Advancement; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Association of State Boards of Education; National Coalition of Independent College and University Students; National Committee for Citizens in Education; National Conference of Jewish Women; National Parent-Teachers Association; National Education Association; National Council for Public Education and Religious Liberty; National School Boards Association; National Urban League; Union of American Hebrew Congregations; United Auto Workers; United States Student Association; A. Philip Randolph Institute; Horace Mann League; League of Women Voters; Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church; Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund; American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance; National Committee for Parents in Education.

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MICHAEL W. KIRST

Loss of Support for Public Secondary Schools: Some Causes and Solutions

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN EDUCATION is regarded with optimism by some and with pessimism by others. Although there is considerable recent evidence to support both sides, an analysis of the fiscal, political, and demographic trends in the eighties favors the pessimistic view for the future. But this negative scenario is not inevitable and, with the proper strategies, can be reversed by education leaders.

Many of public education's problems are, of course, beyond the control of educators, but it is nonetheless particularly vulnerable to public perceptions that its standards, rigor, and quality have slipped. At the heart of this slippage is a watered-down curriculum and the lack of sufficient time spent by students on challenging academic material. Three of the major reasons for the debasement of our school curriculum are: (1) an overattention to the legitimate needs of those in the bottom band of the achievement distribution, which has caused neglect of the college-bound and lowered the instructional center of gravity; (2) a preoccupation with process and technique, and with procedural accountability, finance, and governance, to the detriment of what we teach; and (3) a lack of emphasis on the usefulness and relevance of our common cultural heritage.

The long-range socioeconomic prognosis for public education is not favorable. Public education's national constituency—parents—is declining; national priorities are shifting; public revenue growth is slowing; competition for the educational dollar is increasing; and economic trends more generally do not promise a rapid improvement in this situation. Still, it is within the power of education leaders to galvanize renewed public support if new policies are adopted that preserve the equity-oriented gains of recent decades, but also satisfy certain other legitimate public demands. A revived and expanded coalition for public education should focus on state-level politics, for state revenue systems provide education's best chance for a solid long-term financial base.

Americans can take justifiable pride in their secondary schools. According to historian Diane Ravitch, ours is the most egalitarian school system in the world.[1] In 1950 fewer than 50 percent of pupils in this country graduated from high school. Now over 75 percent graduate, and over half go on to college, compared to most other Western nations, where students are diverted into vocational and technical programs, and only 15 to 30 percent graduate. In light

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of the masses of pupils educated here,[2] the attainment of these students is surprisingly high. Further, our high-school graduates score higher on international assessment tests in reading than all but three other Western industrial nations, despite the fact that those countries graduate a much smaller proportion of their students. The top 5 percent of our students do as well on achievement tests as the top 5 percent in other countries, although education systems there concentrate on the elite.[3]

When Americans set objectives for their secondary schools, they were often met.[4] From 1965 to 1976, when Americans addressed the problem of increased minority access to higher education, the proportion of blacks increased from 5 to 11 percent of all college students. While white college enrollment grew slightly, the proportion of blacks in college more than doubled. Last year the percentage of black high-school graduates going to college *exceeded* that of whites for the first time. By contrast, recent sociological studies from the Soviet Union indicate that an unusual proportion of the places in most elite postsecondary institutions go to children of white-collar workers.

David Cohen and Barbara Neufeld in this issue elaborate the dimensions of public education's achievements. Despite this impressive progress, American public secondary education is under attack from numerous directions. The accusations are so varied that no single philosophical critique is evident.[5] Are Americans losing their historic faith in, and support for, the public schools? There are two views: the negative stresses such indicators as the absolute drop in public approval ratings, local voting, and media stories; the positive stresses the *relative* standing of education compared to other national institutions, and contends that education is faring well in an era of overall institutional loss of public support. After examining these conflicting perceptions, I will turn to an analysis of some of the causes and future trends.

Public Confidence in the Schools—The Negative View

As one observer summarized, the myth of American public education is fading because

> the middle class no longer believes the schools serve their purpose or satisfy their values. A decade of permissiveness and faltering national purpose is now taking its educational toll. Falling test scores, real or imagined fears about personal safety, and the use of schools to achieve a wide variety of secondary social purposes [have] left the schools vulnerable and open to question about their capacity to meet their educational responsibilities.[6]

The pessimists point to Gallup polls that show only 35 percent of the public giving schools a high mark (A or B) in 1979, while 48 percent did so in 1974. The low marks are especially pronounced in the East and West, particularly in big cities. Total private school enrollment has risen only slightly, but enrollments at "Christian Academies," for example, have increased 118 percent over the past ten years. Public support of public education has been declining for some time now; local voters have been turning down school taxes or bonds at a strikingly increased rate beginning in the mid to late sixties.[7]

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Negative trends are *not* restricted to the United States, and they reveal common forces in Western nations that imply the downturn is deeply rooted.[8] In *The School in Question* Torsten Husen cites:

1. A wave of criticism from Left and Right—the latter pointing to low standards and discipline, the former accusing schools of being joyless, oppressive, and autocratic.
2. Commissions of inquiry on both sides of the Atlantic focusing on secondary schools and suggesting fundamental problems.
3. Two major OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) conferences—in 1961 and 1971—where the goals of education are pictured as unmet and the promise of education for increases in social welfare as having waned.
4. Several studies that show attitudes toward school in the United States, the Netherlands, and the Federal Republic of Germany becoming increasingly negative as students progress through the compulsory schooling grades.
5. A slippage in education down the national political priority scale in Germany, America, Great Britain, and Australia during the 1970s, leading to budgetary cuts and to the "management of decline." Across the Western world education expenditures in the 1960s grew twice as fast as the gross national product (GNP), giving rise to demands for accountability and tighter public control.

The Optimistic Viewpoint

The optimists highlight such facts as the $23 billion growth after inflation in kindergarten through twelfth grade expenditures from 1970 to 1980, despite enrollment declines (Tables 1 and 2). Although public education's share of the GNP slipped slightly, there was no dramatic turnaround. The figures on a per pupil basis are even more impressive—an increase of 174 percent from 1964 to 1979.

They point out that the 1970s, a period of supposed loss or decline, was a decade when education shifted its fiscal reliance from the unpopular local property tax to more acceptable state tax sources.[9] State spending for education increased from $16.6 billion to $46.2 billion (1970-80)—up 44.5 percent in real terms. Elementary school pupil-teacher ratios, including instructional personnel as well as classroom teachers, declined from 28.7 to 1 in 1958 to 20.9 to 1 in 1978. Optimists ask, "Is this a loss of public confidence, much less a 'crisis'?"

The optimistic can also fall back on the "relative decline" argument. Although public confidence in the public schools dropped again between 1979 and 1980, only religion, banks, and the military ranked higher (Table 3).

Even more heartening are public responses to questionnaires on selected government services in states voting on tax or expenditure limitation proposals

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Table 1. Revenue Receipts of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by Source: 1942 to 1978

School Year Ending	Current dollars (in millions)			
	Total	Federal	State	Local[1]
1942	$ 2,417	$ 34	$ 760	$ 1,622
1946	3,060	41	1,062	1,956
1950	5,437	156	2,166	3,116
1954	7,867	355	2,944	4,568
1958	12,182	486	4,800	6,895
1962	17,528	761	6,789	9,978
1966	25,357	1,997	9,920	13,440
1970	40,267	3,220	16,063	20,985
1974	58,231	4,930	24,281	29,020
1978	80,925	6,575	35,692	38,658
	Constant 1977-78 dollars (in millions)			
1942	9,717	137	3,055	6,521
1946	10,513	141	3,649	6,720
1950	14,379	413	5,728	8,241
1954	18,314	826	6,853	10,634
1958	26,693	1,065	10,518	15,108
1962	36,509	1,585	14,141	20,783
1966	49,733	3,917	19,456	26,360
1970	66,771	5,339	26,636	34,797
1974	78,193	6,620	32,605	38,968
1978	80,925	6,575	35,692	38,658
	Percentage Distribution			
1942	100.0	1.4	31.5	67.1
1946	100.0	1.4	34.7	63.8
1950	100.0	2.9	39.8	57.3
1954	100.0	4.5	37.4	58.1
1958	100.0	4.0	39.4	56.6
1962	100.0	4.3	38.7	56.9
1966	100.0	7.9	39.1	53.0
1970	100.0	8.0	39.9	52.1
1974	100.0	8.5	41.7	49.8
1978	100.0	8.1	44.1	47.8
1979 (est.)	100.0	8.8	47.4	43.7

Source: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, National Center for Education
Note: Details may not add up to totals because of rounding.
[1]Includes intermediate

(Table 4). Public schools rank ahead of other services, except for police and fire. Education supporters also stress that if the public has lost faith in the schools as a prime force for social advancement, why are more blacks than ever enrolled in some kind of school? Ravitch found a massive movement of blacks into college from 1965 to 1976—274,000 to 1,062,000, or an increase from 4.8 percent of all

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Table 2. Total Elementary/Secondary Public School Expenditures Selected Years (in billions)

School Year Ending	Total Expenditures	Total Expenditures as a Percent of GNP	Total Expenditures as a Percent of Personal Income
1969	$35.5	3.8	4.7
1975	62.3	4.1	5.0
1976	69.8	4.1	5.1
1977	74.7	4.0	4.9
1978	80.9	3.8	4.7
1979	86.2	3.7	4.5

Current Expenditures per Pupil 1969 to 1979

	Amount	Percent Change from 1969
1969	$ 657	
1975	1,200	82.6
1976	1,376	109.4
1977	1,493	127.2
1978	1,644	150.2
1979	1,798	173.7

Source: National Education Association, Estimates of School Statistics, 1978-79. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1979, p. 25

Table 3. Gallup Poll of Confidence in Institutions

Question: I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Would you tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one—a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little.

Following are the results, ranked in order of the percentages of the public saying they have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in each institution.

	1980	1979	1977	1975	1973
Organized religion	66	65	64	68	66
Banks	60	60			
The military	52	54	57	58	
Public schools	51	53	54		58
U.S. Supreme Court	47	45	46	49	44
Newspapers	42	51			39
Organized labor	35	36	39	38	30
Congress	34	34	40	40	42
Television	33	38			37
Big business	29	32	22	23	26

Source: *San Jose Mercury*, November 6, 1980

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Table 4. Public Opinion on Selected Government Services after Votes on Tax or Expenditure Limitation Proposals, 1978

Service	Percentage Favoring Maintaining or Increasing Current Service Levels				
	California	Colorado	Idaho	Michigan	Oregon
Public schools	81	69	75	73	61
Police and Fire	93	85	84	88	82
Sanitation	87	55	58	59	41
Health and Hospitals	79	63	63	71	67
Parks and Recreation	72	71	54	64	61
Social services	34	54	43	49	46

Source: Robert Palaich, Jim Kloss, and Mary Frase Williams, "The Politics of Tax and Expenditure Limitations: An Analysis of Public Opinion, Voting Behavior and the Campaigns in Four States," Working Paper No. 25, Denver: Education Finance Center, Education Commission of the States, and unpublished ECS data.

college students to 10.19 percent.[10] It appears that disadvantaged youths still believe that education is crucial for occupational advancement. The impressive growth in adult education at high schools also indicates this continued faith in education. Indeed, California had to place a ceiling on its reimbursement for night school adult education at high-school campuses because of the rapid escalation in demand.

Nor has there been any dramatic increase in total private school enrollment. It continues to fluctuate between 10 and 11 percent. Indeed, the increase in private school enrollment since 1975 has merely restored the overall level of nonpublic enrollment that existed in the late 1960s prior to the decline of Catholic enrollment.[11] Disillusionment with the public schools has not been demonstrated by acceptance of one or more of the radical alternative approaches such as vouchers. The major increase in private schools is in fundamentalist Christian schools that feature a religious approach that violates court restrictions on church-state separation within public schools.

A good case can be made that the loss of public confidence in education is actually the inevitable end of blind faith in public schools as a panacea for societal problems. But this ignores other indicators of discontent. Those most frequently cited are Gallup poll results (Table 5).

Table 5. Public Ratings (by Grades) of School Performance

	Percent of Those Polled				
	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
A	18	13	13	11	9
B	30	30	29	26	27
C	21	28	28	28	30
D	6	9	10	10	11
F	5	7	6	6	8

Source: Gallup Poll

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Table 6. Priorities: Board versus Public—Priorities of Concerns among Respondents to the *Journal*—V.P.I. Survey and the Gallup Poll

School Board Members		Gallup Poll	
Concerns	Totals—%	Concerns	Totals—%
Declining enrollment	39.0	Discipline	24.0
Collective bargaining	29.7	Drug abuse	13.0
Cutting programs	24.9	Declining tax base	12.0
Curriculum reform	23.2	Curriculum reform	11.0
Discipline	22.8	Poor teachers	10.0
High cost of energy	19.9	Desegregation	9.0
Federal interference	19.3	Crime/vandalism	4.0
Declining tax base	18.8	Overcrowded schools/classes	4.0
Staff cuts	17.7	Student apathy	4.0
Public apathy	17.3	Parent apathy	3.0
Outmoded facilities	15.3	Teacher apathy	3.0
Accountability	10.1	Alcoholism	2.0
Drug abuse	9.6	Mismanagement	2.0
Teacher militancy	7.2	School board policies	2.0
Student legal rights	2.9	Communication problems	2.0
Desegregation	2.4	Outmoded facilities	2.0
Other	19.9	Federal interference	2.0
		Parent involvement	1.0
		Teacher militancy	1.0
		Declining enrollment	1.0
		Other	25.0

Source: *American School Board Journal*, January, 1980, p. 24.

Gallup polls and a national sample survey of local school board members reveal a striking lack of agreement on priority concerns and problems (Table 6). This lack of agreement portends larger decreases in public support, as local school boards neglect the problems the public is most concerned about.

A number of factors point to the secondary schools as the prime problem area. These include: (1) declining test scores; (2) increases in problems of discipline; (3) some evidence of decline in graduation rates; (4) declines in the number of courses taken in sciences, mathematics, social studies, and foreign languages; (5) disasters along all of these dimensions for minorities and in the inner cities; (6) parental dissatisfaction; (7) teacher morale problems created by falling enrollments and threats to the economic base of support; (8) excessive reliance on procedures such as reports and regulations that interfere with professional decision-making and that take time and resources; (9) burdensome demands with respect to handicapped, bilingual, vocational, and disadvantaged students, desegregation, and so on; and (9) lack of a common core of studies or direction for all students because of a Balkanized curriculum. Most of these problems will continue to get worse as the schools face increasing deterioration in job markets for high-school graduates, additional reductions in enrollments, and a large increase in the proportion of minority students.

These declines point to private schooling as an increasing concern of the middle class, not just of religionists and the well-off. Fewer children in later life

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means more disposable income for private education. In California, for example, the growth in private school enrollment has been outpaced by the even larger growth in competition—as evidenced by those taking private school entrance exams—for the limited openings available.

Causes for the Loss of Public Confidence

Though we cannot measure precisely the loss in public confidence, the perception of such a phenomenon is widely shared. Even more unclear are the reasons for this loss. An incorrect assessment of causes could lead to incorrect remedies or marginal improvement strategies. A list of reasons for decline of confidence includes:

1. The public blames local schools for unpopular policies, such as desegregation and bilingual education, that are mandated by distant authorities.
2. Inflation and unpopular taxes, such as property assessment increases, make the schools the unintended target of tax revolts.
3. There is a loss of self-interest because fewer voters have children in the public schools—a decline of three in five to one in five since the early 1950s. A Gallup poll shows that people with children in public schools give schools higher grades. As the American average age increases, attention and funding shift away from children.
4. The public is misled by media stories that overemphasize sensational issues, such as violence against teachers, and neglect positive achievements.
5. There have been real performance failures in school attainment and discipline. Academic and nonacademic standards have fallen, the schools are unsafe and too large, value-centered education is inadequate, and so on.
6. School systems are bureaucratic and unresponsive to public demands. Parents and taxpayers are frustrated in their attempts to influence the system, because control is scattered at so many levels, government and private.
7. America is going through a general loss of faith in institutions, so the schools are caught up in larger societal forces. The era of unquestioning faith in schools is over, but other institutions have suffered loss of support as well.
8. Teacher unions, tenure, and seniority have undermined faith in the profession. There is a backlash against militant teacher tactics and teacher involvement in elections.
9. Young people are kept in school too long and need more exposure to the work place to counter an unproductive "youth culture."

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All of these alleged causes may not be factors. Even if they are, we have no statistical analysis of how much each adds to the problem. We also cannot trace the interaction effects among these factors with any precision, and we lack the human and fiscal resources to attack all causes simultaneously. Education leaders can work most directly on point 5—the standards and pupil performance issue—and point 6—the governance structures. Major social and economic forces, beyond the influence of educators, cause smaller families, inflation, and loss of faith in all major American institutions. Moreover, it is unlikely that collective bargaining or school desegregation will be repealed. Although they can be changed by education policymakers, parent participation and governance changes have been tried and have not generated a major change in overall public support. And rarely have concerted attempts been made to raise academic standards, a focus of this essay.

Before turning to an analysis of some solutions, it is desirable to look ahead to the eighties, so that we do not attack old issues or become unduly alarmed about the magnitude of the problem. Education policy is prone to cycles and fads that are often changed by the time school reformers can mount initiatives. For example, many of the reports on secondary education in the early 1970s attacked problems related to the war in Vietnam that had abated long before the reports were finished.[12] Young people are heterogeneous, and one reform strategy is unlikely to be effective. Given education's impressive fiscal growth in the past decade, the burden of proof is on the pessimists. Consequently, we start with the most likely projections of the societal matrix in which education will be embedded in the 1980s. It is these broad socioeconomic trends that will orient public attitudes.

Fiscal and Political Environment of Secondary Schools in the Eighties

It is difficult to be optimistic about the eighties based on demographic, fiscal, and political trends. Thus, some type of intervention strategies seems warranted, rather than merely letting events run their course. Enrollment in grades nine through twelve peaked in 1976 and will have decreased 24 percent by 1990.[13] The impact will vary by specific states and sections. We assume that migration from the industrial Northeast (excluding northern New England) and North Central states to the South and West will continue. The pattern is striking: rapid growth continues in the South and West, with slow growth in the North Central states and the beginning of a decline in the Northeast. By 1990 the Northeast will be the least populous region. It is difficult to say whether these regional population shifts will overbalance general declines in the school-age population in the West and the South. We can say with confidence that the declines in the Sunbelt regions will be less precipitous than the average, and in the Northeast and North Central states, faster than the average. It is estimated that the percentage of youth age fifteen to twenty-four in the total population will drop from 17 percent by 1985—from a high of 19 percent as recently as 1977—to 14 percent in 1990, and will continue to decrease substantially.

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The rapid growth of the Sunbelt states must be understood as only relative to the stagnation and decline of the states in the industrial belt. The rate of enrollment growth in most Sunbelt states and their metropolitan areas is no faster, and in some cases slower, than in the 1960s. If current low birth rates persist, population and employment cannot increase in some regions without causing a loss somewhere else. The state revenue systems of the South and West should benefit enough from economic growth to provide ample resources for public services. For example, growth in Texas has permitted a jump from $1.2 billion to $5.1 billion in annual public education funding since 1969.[14] But the health of the economy also takes its toll. The plunge in automobile sales caused a 13 percent decrease in Michigan State Education Department funds for 1980.

Another facet of population movement is the shift from metropolitan to nonmetropolitan areas. In the 1960s metropolitan areas increased in population 16.6 percent, while nonmetropolitan areas increased by only 6.6 percent.[15] Between 1970 and 1977, however, population in metropolitan areas increased only 4 percent, while it increased 11 percent in nonmetropolitan areas.[16] The current lower rate of growth in metropolitan areas is the result of a combination of depopulation of the central cities and the slackening growth boom of the suburbs. Since 1970 central cities have lost over 2 million persons, a decline of 5 percent. Suburbs increased in population 12 percent,[17] but this is small compared with 26.7 percent during the 1960s and 45.9 percent during the 1950s. The fastest growth in suburbs is in the South; the fastest growth in nonmetropolitan areas is in the West.[18]

The demographic decline will seriously impact the older suburbs of the industrial East. New York State officials, for example, expect enrollment in Long Island public secondary schools to drop by 35 percent in Nassau County and 21 percent in Suffolk County.[19] Closing high schools causes even more political resistance than elementary schools. Class sizes drop initially, until schools close, and state finance formulas are adjusted. A crucial decision will be which courses are eliminated—photography, driver training, or calculus. If the advanced academic electives are eliminated because these enrollments drop the most, academic achievement and standards will decline also.

The fiscal and political trends do not seem more favorable than the demographic. Shifting social and demographic patterns will place education in a weakened political bargaining position for funding increases. A trend toward tougher competition for funds is likely because of threats to local and federal revenue bases. First, for a variety of reasons, voter support for increases in local school finances will continue to decline or remain at the current depressed level. The number of people with a direct stake in education (parents) and those who are not alienated from schools is declining. During the 1980s the only population sectors in which enrollments will increase rapidly, such as Hispanics and low-income citizens, have little political influence over budgets and notoriously low voter turnouts. Special programs for these pupils, including bilingual education and desegregation, will further depress voter support. Second, the number of people with no direct interest in education and who, for a variety of reasons, are probable "no" voters on local property tax referenda is increasing.[20] The total number of senior citizens—who have a high tendency to vote and to resist property tax increases—will increase dramatically. Inflation

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psychology will depress willingness to increase local taxes. Third, education is expected to face increased competition for quality level funding at the federal level from defense, energy, Medicare, and senior citizens. And the Reagan Administration will need to cut social programs to finance federal tax cuts.

While the empirical evidence is *not* conclusive that the age composition of a community affects support for public schools, the overall characteristics of U.S. senior citizens portend rough going for local school tax increases. Voters with less education tend to vote "no" on such increases.[21] Nearly half the population over 65 never attended high school. Only 16 percent have one year of college.[22] The population over 65 doubled (from 12 to 24 million) between 1958 and 1978. The Census Bureau estimates a much larger increase in the next fifty years.[23] Educators must convince the elderly that public schools must maintain their current fiscal base.

Given the probable erosion of support at the federal and local levels, increased political cohesion and action among education groups at the state level are crucial, a strategy I will return to at the conclusion of this essay. Predominant reliance on state revenues began during the 1970s. From 1960 to 1979 eleven states adopted a personal income tax; nine, a corporate levy; and ten, a general sales tax. Maintaining the impressive growth of the seventies in state education support will be difficult given education's history of state political factionalism.

Other Competitive Forces

In the 1970s the trend for education outside of the K-12 schooling institution began to grow at a faster pace. Given limited resources in a slow-growth economy, more money for preschool and out-of-school job programs means less money for the elementary/secondary program. In 1960, 25 percent of the women were in the labor force;[24] by 1978 this had doubled. The labor force participation of young women twenty-five to thirty-four years of age increased from 36 percent in 1960 to 62 percent in 1979. During this same period the labor force participation rate for mothers of children under six rose even more dramatically, from 19 to 42 percent.[25] It is estimated that by 1990, 60 to 70 percent of women will be in the labor force.[26] This has important implications for day care and similar custodial programs for children. For example, the only school level showing an increase in enrollment between 1970 and 1978 was nursery school. There were two thirds more children in nursery school in 1978 than in 1970.[27]

Moreover, women will increasingly enter the work force as our inflationary society requires more income merely to support a basic standard of living. If current child care arrangements are projected into the future, the number of children of working mothers served by day-care centers and nursery schools could increase dramatically. Will this begin to shift public pressure and financing toward preschool programs and away from kindergarten through twelfth grade?

In the sixties many school districts wanted little to do with day-care programs. As K-12 enrollments decrease, a reversal in attitude seems likely. School lobbies may push to include day-care programs under the district's

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umbrella, but during the 1970s public schools made no significant inroads on the nonschool growth of child care. As the political struggle grows at the state and federal levels, one might expect to find education departments seeking more control over day care and education-related programs offered through other governmental departments. After Proposition 13 passed in California, local public school systems wanted to drop their child care programs and put the savings into the K-12 structure. But child care lobbyists successfully included a prohibition in the Proposition 13 state bailout against any cuts in child care.

From 1969 to 1979 Department of Labor expenditures for out-of-school manpower programs for youth and adults grew from $2 billion a year to about $12 billion. This prodigious growth was in stark contrast to the $800 million the federal government has provided for high-school vocational education. Indeed, the Carter Administration tried to cut vocational education, but was overridden by Congress.

Public schools have failed to extend their boundaries to include large numbers of preschool and out-of-school students. This has cost them dearly in terms of total expenditures and in broadening the base of support for public school coalitions. Some of these negative political and expenditure trends could be offset by a larger public school role in these related growth sectors of preschool and out-of-school education.

Impact of Quality Teacher Shortage

There is some relationship between the public's perception of teaching effectiveness and a willingness to support education. In real income, today's teachers earn only 2 percent more than they did in 1965, since 1974 wage settlements have lagged behind inflation.[28] In the long run this means that quality staff will be bid away to other occupations. The teaching market is currently depressed, as education majors face a relatively low probability of being hired. Additionally, fewer middle-class and upper-middle-class women are entering teaching as alternative career opportunities increase. Education degrees granted at a bachelor's level are expected to fall off precipitously from 194,210 in 1972-73 to 116,340 in 1986-87, a decline of 40 percent. If teacher demand continues to decline, new entrants may be even fewer. This will cause higher per pupil costs for current operations because of the minimal opportunity to replace expensive senior teachers with beginners at lower salary levels.

New teachers will more likely come from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds. If they are adequately trained, this could be advantageous to urban districts with increasing numbers of students from similar backgrounds. If they are not, districts could find themselves replacing teachers with less able personnel.

The NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) projects an increasing glut in the supply of teachers despite the decrease in the numbers of new graduates, indicating the availability of high-quality personnel if demand remains depressed. Alternatively, it is estimated that the total stock of teachers will actually *decline* 8 percent between now and 1986. An increased reserve pool of teachers will reduce the expected value of any job they might get, as each one faces a lesser probability of being hired. This will continue to encourage further exits from the reserve pool and discourage new entrants. Recently there has

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been an alarming drop in the scholastic aptitude test scores of students interested in a teaching career, whose average verbal score is 392. According to the College Board, SAT scores of prospective teachers dropped twice as fast as the national average and now rank second to last (ethnic studies) in SATs among types of college major subjects. As Myron Atkins's essay in this volume demonstrates, the outlook is not favorable for high-quality entrants into teacher training. If the public perceives that the quality of teachers has dropped, it may be more reluctant to support spending increases.

Competition from New Societal Forces

A variety of nondemographic factors are also likely to interact with demographic trends to influence future school politics and expenditures. Energy costs, for example, will have many impacts on education. Direct effects include rising fuel costs for heating, regular school transportation, and busing to achieve racial integration. Increased transportation costs may cause curtailment of instructional costs at a time of shrinking budgets and inflation. The indirect political effect could stem from a reduction in discretionary income of families owing to higher energy costs, which will affect what taxpayers are willing to allocate to schools. Moreover, high-priced energy may alter current political demography by encouraging people to live closer to the city.

Given this context, secondary education in 1990 will most likely operate at about the same level of real expenditures per pupil (current level plus inflation) as today. The zero-sum era has arrived. California's experience after Proposition 13 will become more typical in other states. As courses and programs for handicapped, bilingual, and minimum competency are added, other courses must be cut. Often these are advanced academic subjects such as physics and third-year languages. Some LEAs (Local Education Agency), however, cut vocational education and nonacademic electives. Local school boards often cut the lowest enrollment courses *without regard to curricular priorities*. A more drastic scenario would be similar to that at San Jose High School.[29] The school day is cut back from seven to five periods, reducing time on academic tasks. Counselors are eliminated, and young teachers laid off. Building maintenance deteriorates. Programs for the gifted are eliminated, and many high-achieving pupils transfer out. The school is caught in a downward cycle of morale and expectations.

Restoring Public Confidence and Improving School Performance

This pessimistic scenario need not become widespread. Although we cannot deal with all the causes listed for loss of public confidence, there are several courses of action that may reverse the negative trends. Educators must improve the standards and performance of high-school pupils. A rigorous school climate can be the springboard for aggressive state-level focused political action. But some positive results and strategies must precede attempts to rally the public school constituencies. Educational improvement must be generated from a detailed grasp of what high schools are really like.[30] We are only beginning to explore systematically the daily life of various types of high schools. Research suggests that they offer a smorgasbord of courses in a "loosely coupled"

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administrative structure. There is little coherence in the curriculum, and students are given little guidance. Federal and state policy initiatives focus on the low end of the achievement distribution, while parents of higher achieving students become increasingly discontent. New policy initiatives must focus on the top achieving 50 percent, without giving up on programs for improvement of education of the disadvantaged. During the 1970s public policy focused on changes in finance and governance and neglected the content and standards of education. School finance reform and parent advisory councils did little to restore coherence and clarity to the former or to improve the low quality of the high-school curriculum. Federal and state categorical programs focused attention and effort on the lowest achieving students, while the college-bound were fed a diet of watered-down curriculum, fewer academic courses, and less time in challenging instructional tasks.

Several disquieting reports undergird the view that the substance of what is taught, read, and learned has eroded.

- A nationwide sample of children at the fourth and eighth grades completed the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in 1970 and 1977. At the tenth percentile, scores increased. At the fiftieth percentile, scores were up slightly at the fourth grade and down slightly at the eighth. But in the short seven-year period, those at the upper achievement levels had slipped as much as one full grade equivalent in such subjects as reading comprehension, vocabulary, and math application.
- The average textbook has been considerably downgraded in reading level. In California, the readability level of state-adopted texts has dropped two grade levels in the past ten to fifteen years. Nationally, many of our children read material substantially below their potential reading level.
- In many public schools students do not encounter our literary heritage. We no longer assure that students have a core curriculum in literature, ethics, or history. In California, the percentage of students in grades seven through twelve who take a social studies course dropped from 71 percent in 1975 to 45 percent in 1977, a decrease of 575,000 enrollments.

Some Strategies to Rebuild Public Confidence

In another article in this issue Stephen Bailey compiles a number of potentially positive trends that could improve public support of education. I will not attempt a comprehensive attack on the problems outlined above but will focus instead on two promising strategies: improving academic standards, and the formation of political coalitions to ensure adequate funds.

ACADEMIC DECLINE: THE CASE OF CALIFORNIA

For years the California State Board of Education watched with other disturbed educators, parents, and legislators the slow, but steady, decline in the

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achievement of California's public school students. The evidence of this downward trend was collected and reported in the Department of Education's California Assessment Program (CAP), an annual measurement of the reading and math skills of all the state's third, sixth, and twelfth-graders.

Twelve years ago a reversal of this trend was noted in third-grade reading test scores, and in the 1977-78 school year sixth-grade scores turned upward in all content areas tested, including reading, spelling, written expression, and mathematics. While twelfth-grade math and written expression scores showed slight improvement in that period, spelling remained unchanged, and the 0.1 percent loss in reading scores continued an eight-year decline for the state's graduating seniors. Compared to 1970 norms, this record placed California's median twelfth-grade students nine percentile points below the national norm in reading, 16 percentile points below in written expression, and seven percentile points below in mathematics.

Statistics compiled by the nine-campus University of California (UC) system are even more alarming. The University's 1981 Policy Committee to Assist Unprepared Students concluded:

> We are convinced, by test score trends, basic skills course enrollment trends, and anecdotal evidence, that a decline in the skill level of UC's entering freshmen has occurred. In fact, although, on the average, UC freshmen still score well above the national means of the College Board's SAT exams, those mean scores have been *declining faster* than the national means or the means for all college-bound seniors in California. In 1968, not one campus of the University had as many as half its entering students scoring below 550 on the SAT-Verbal exam; in 1979, more than half of the entering students scored below 550 on *all eight* UC general campuses, and on five of our campuses (Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Riverside, and Santa Barbara) *at least two-thirds* of the students scored below 550. In 1979, every campus except Berkeley had fewer entering students scoring *above 550* on the SAT-Verbal exam than it had in 1968, despite an increase of 4,500 students taking the test. In mathematics, the number scoring below 550 has increased but not as dramatically as in the verbal scores.
>
> This decline is borne out by increasing enrollments in Subject A or equivalent [remedial] writing courses and in pre-calculus math courses. Between 1975-76 and 1979-80, we estimate that the percent of UC entering freshmen taking pre-Subject A and Subject A or equivalent writing courses rose from 49% to 56%; enrollments in pre-calculus math classes rose from 36% to 49%. And this decline was also reported to us anecdotally by many of the faculty and administrators we interviewed.

The SAT decline was preceded by a rise that peaked in 1968. The decline is very broad, and no particular group has caused it. The University states specifically that the decline was not due to an increase in minorities.

The turnaround in elementary student achievement may be attributable to many factors, not least of which has been the allocation of substantial amounts of money to the state's elementary schools through federal and state categorical funding programs. ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) Title I's compensatory education, Early Childhood Education, federal and state bilingual programs, migrant education, gifted education, ESEA Title IV-C's innovative program support, Miller-Unruh reading program, State Educationally Disadvantaged Youth, and countless lesser funding programs

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channeled large amounts of money to the development and improvement of special programs. With few exceptions, elementary schools were the beneficiaries of this largess, which presumably had significant and positive effect on student achievement. The lack of such resources in the state's secondary schools is offered as one explanation for the continuing slippage in twelfth-grade achievement test scores. An analysis of the 1977-78 CAP results, however, indicates that twelfth-grade test scores are linked to other, more basic and significant factors. These new data, following years of concern and mounting anxiety, prompted the board to initiate a closer examination of California's secondary schools and to invite panels of experts to comment on various aspects of secondary education.

BASIC ACADEMIC COURSES—WHAT DO CALIFORNIA STUDENTS TAKE?

Some of the most telling data on the academic achievement of California's twelfth-graders were derived from the College Board's Admission Testing Program (ATP) questionnaire, completed by students when they register to take the SAT. In 1978-79 the Board tested roughly one million college-bound high-school seniors throughout the nation. Approximately one hundred thousand, or one tenth of the total, were from California. In addition to SAT scores, the ATP reports other data particularly significant to an understanding of California student achievement: number of years of study in academic subject matter areas; most recent grades; honor courses enrollments; and ambitions for advanced placement in college.

Number of Years of Study in Academic Subject Matter Areas—Except for the area of foreign languages, California students report fewer years of study in each of six areas included on the Student Descriptive Questionnaire. In math, for example, 65 percent of the male students and 45 percent of the female students tested nationally take four or more years; in California 53 percent of male students and 32 percent of female students take an equivalent amount of math. Three or more years of science are taken by 30 percent of the male students and 16 percent of the female students nationally, and by 15 percent of California's male students and 7 percent of its female students.

Most Recent Grades—In all areas except mathematics, California students report having received higher grades than the average student nationally. The difference is larger in social studies, English, and foreign languages than in the sciences.

Honor Course Enrollments—With the exception of English, smaller percentages of California students report their grades were earned in advanced, accelerated, or honors courses. The difference is most notable in the sciences.

Ambitions for Advanced Placement in College—Except in the sciences, larger percentages of California students express intent to apply for advanced placement, credit by examination, or exemption from required courses in college. The difference is larger in English.

What these comparative figures mean is that California graduates are more likely to be disappointed when they reach college than other students. They

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studied academic subjects for fewer years while in high school, were enrolled in smaller percentages of honors courses, were given higher grades, and have greater expectations for advanced college placement. For supporting data in future analysis of the relationship between the number of academic courses taken and student achievement, the Board analyzed the 1978-79 CAP results. They clearly show that students who took three or more years of English scored higher on the California Test of Basic Skills than students who took less.

LOWER STANDARDS, FEWER COURSES

An appealing explanation for California students' unfavorable comparison on the ATP questionnaire is that forced budget reductions have necessitated deep cuts in high-school elective courses. Revenue limitations placed on school districts in 1972 effectively put a lid on local program development, and subsequent tax-and-spending restrictions curtailed such things as academic courses with low enrollment in most districts. As schools struggled to maintain basic programs and services, their curricular offerings were essentially aimed at meeting minimum requirements.

A closer look at the process by which these minimum graduation requirements are set suggests that the long slide of California's college-bound high-school graduates can be traced to earlier roots. The absence of absolute state requirements led local school districts to establish their own graduation standards. The minimum acceptable level throughout the state has generally been to provide students with an academic background that will enable them to meet university and college entrance requirements. A base level is the entrance requirements established by the California State University and Colleges (CSUC) system. More rigorous high-school standards are aimed at qualifying graduates for entrance into the UC system.

Both sets of standards have tended to encourage or at least rationalize the reduction of academic courses offered by the state's high schools. CSUC requires a minimum 2.0 grade point—which is based on the requirements of the individual student's high school—and a qualifying score on the SAT, which is based on a test-score/grade-point eligibility index. In essence, this tells local school districts that CSUC's nineteen campuses will accept whatever standards any of the state's 850 high schools set. Further, a student who achieves a grade point of 3.2 or above is excused from taking the SAT. This process eliminates the possibility that the tendency of California high schools to grade high in comparison to other states will be checked or countered in the CSUC admissions procedure.

Though not as fluid, UC entrance requirements have been equally culpable in the decline of high-school standards. Alice Cox, UC assistant vice-president, reviewed for the board the rigorous requirements for university graduation that were in place several years ago. High schools then had strong programs in advanced placement, and incoming freshmen had strong basic skills achievement and came into the University well prepared. It appeared to higher education, Cox recalled, that existing UC graduation standards were no longer necessary, because the high schools were doing such a good job in preparing their students. UC thus reduced its undergraduate course requirements. High

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schools consequently adjusted their own graduation standards downward. For these reasons, Cox stated, all segments of education, specifically higher education, share responsibility for the decline in state achievement scores.

UC is now putting back some of its graduation requirements and elevating freshman entrance requirements. Beginning in the fall of 1981, four years of English will be mandatory instead of the present three for incoming freshmen. The University plans to raise its own graduation requirements in its sequence of required courses that includes history, government, English, math, lab science, and foreign languages. As might be expected, Cox warns, standards can be quickly lowered but are painfully slow to raise. High schools that dropped third-year and fourth-year academic courses in response to UC's initiative several years ago are now frozen into a restrictive curriculum by legislated fiscal constraints. An abrupt restructuring of entrance requirements could suddenly exclude most California high-schools graduates from University admission. It is apparent that any revision of existing high-school graduation standards or university and college entrance requirements must of necessity take into account the future financial base of the state's public school system.

Cox also feels that the validity of traditional admissions requirements—number of course years, standardized test results, and grades—are open to serious question. UC is currently researching alternative methods for predicting academic success that address the critical need for parity on the basis of sex and ethnicity. This effort, and UC's developing outreach programs to help junior and senior high schools to improve the level of student preparation, may add new dimensions to high-school graduation standards. They may also illustrate how those segments of education that share responsibility for the student decline should and can cooperate to rebuild student achievement.

ESTABLISHING LOCAL STANDARDS

Preparing students to meet college entrance requirements is a common factor in local curriculum policy determination, but not necessarily the dominant one. Social and political forces, some of staggering proportions, brush educational considerations aside in local curriculum development.

Schools as Society's Problem-solver—The American public has chosen to use public schools as the national problem-solver. This heritage gives the schools insoluble difficulties. Local board members and school staffs are faced with the insurmountable tasks of alleviating racial and ethnic segregation, assimilating and acculturating hundreds of educationally limited, non-English-speaking immigrants and refugees, and assuring equal educational opportunity for special needs students. Schoolpeople who are expected to handle these problems with relatively meager resources become extremely frustrated. Resources and energies are drained away from academic programs, the neglect of which will later register on state achievement tests—and rain renewed criticism on the schools for their continued "failure."

The influx of minority students, for example, caused several California schools to drop trigonometry and calculus so that they could prepare newly arrived aliens for the state proficiency test. To make up for this loss, the district

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asked the community college to come in and offer the courses for high-school advancement and college credit.

Philosophy—College versus Vocation—An examination of California's ATP scores prompts the question: "Why don't schools that offer vocational and nonacademic courses divert some of those resources into advanced academic courses?" This focus on college-bound students may overemphasize the academic side of the high-school curriculum. All students do not aspire to college, and the balance among course emphases must be tailored to the student's career goals.

Members of the board expressed concern that schools must also deal with the reality of a complex society, such as ours, that makes its own demands on the kinds of abilities schools should develop in their students. Academic courses as mediums for learning and communication are important for all students and can provide the verbal and quantitative modes that are the easiest and most economical means for learning. Also, the increasing number of students who are entering community colleges later in life and the increasing rate of students who are reentering college point to the need to rethink traditional concepts about who is college-bound and who is not.

Mixed Messages from the State—The California Legislature and the State Board of Education have given local districts several directives in the past five to ten years about how to spend their energy and resources. In this growing itemization of priorities, little emphasis has been placed on developing and improving academic course content. State Board members found, for example, that one district was spending practically all its curriculum development effort responding to the state minimum competency testing requirement. This and other state policies that emphasize needs of the handicapped and bilingual and other programs have directed attention away from the college-bound students. The situation will not likely be reversed until the state clarifies its position.

Money—Always an Issue—Proposition 13 is only one of the latest government spending limits to force cutbacks in local school programming. One of the first defensive moves in the high schools has been to drop from six periods a day to five and to eliminate advanced electives in favor of higher enrollment basic courses. Summer school enrichment and advanced placement courses have also been cancelled, and other economic trade-offs made, such as one large city district giving up certain academic courses for lower cost physical education classes. Along with everything else, money is an issue in local curriculum development, and it provides much of the explanation about why California students take fewer advanced academic courses than average students nationally.

THE STATE AND LOCAL ROLES IN RAISING ACADEMIC STANDARDS

In California, the state has traditionally had limited responsibility in setting high-school graduation requirements. Schools are required by statute to offer courses in English, social studies, foreign languages, physical education, science, math, fine arts, applied arts, vocational-technical education, auto driver

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education, and such other courses as prescribed by the local governing board. Diplomas are to be issued only to students who have completed the course of study prescribed by this board. Requirements for graduation include English, American history, American government, math, science, physical education, and such other subjects as may be designated. In prescribing courses of study and graduation requirements, local governing boards determine the number of courses that will be offered, the units a student must take to graduate, and the attendance record a student must maintain. Beginning with the 1978-79 school year, schools are required to develop local programs to assess pupil proficiency, and as of June 1980, no pupil who has not met the locally set standards of proficiency in basic skills can receive a high-school diploma.

In testimony before the board several witnesses contended that structural bias at the local level is sufficient reason to believe that the public interest can be better served by appropriate state action. Local curriculum considerations are too particularistic to the local setting; accountability for program decline over a period of years is not fixed; and curriculum matters get low priority in the local setting. Rarely do local school boards examine their overall curriculum and assess what courses students are taking and the linkage among courses.

In the State Board of Education's first formal consideration of the condition of secondary school curricula, reference was made to the role and responsibilities of the state. The Board was told that all education levels in the state are responsible for the decline in student achievement, and that only state leadership can bring order to a situation that continues to deteriorate. But who can and should speak for the state? How can the state focus local attention on curricular disarray without preempting one of the last areas of local control?

As a first step, high schools should increase time on academic instructional tasks in various academic areas, particularly math and science, to meet the needs of an increasingly technological society. Although the time spent on a task is only one of many variables that make up good schools, it is a policy arena that is more easily changed than retraining thousands of teachers. Colleges can help by requiring more academic courses for admission and giving increased weight to higher level academic courses. CSUC, for example, admits on the basis of grade averages. All courses are weighted the same except for physical education. A grade of B in photography counts the same as a B in physics. UC requires only one year of science and two of mathematics. Higher education is reluctant to tighten up its standards because of an expected 18 percent drop in eighteen-year-olds during the 1980s. Consequently, the trustees must have higher priorities than preserving all the existing faculty and courses.

This increase in academic standards, however, must be preceded by a new conception of the high-school core curriculum, or general education. Past reforms with a lasting impact have primarily added new organizational layers and functions to high schools (vocational courses and driver's education). But the projected limited fiscal resources of the 1980s imply concentration on the very reforms that have *not* left a residue—changes in classroom techniques and content within the core academic areas. As Gordon Cawelti writes:

> It seems increasingly clear that there needs to be some synthesizing of the patchwork curriculum into a more coherent pattern of learning experiences which

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> focus on *both* individual needs and those of society. This suggests more interdisciplinary courses out of which advanced elective courses must continue. Since schools clearly do not have the time for all to have individual courses in art, music, theater, literature, and the like, a unified humanities course showing the interrelationship of all these subjects is more feasible.[31]

Although it is imperative that the high-school curriculum retains an extensive offering of elective courses to capitalize on student interests, these must be extensions of a core, or general education, curriculum. Schools have been pressured into developing instructional courses in drug abuse, sex education, moral education, energy, career education, ethnic studies, parenting, environment, and so on. Rarely do educators or the public ask what is to be excluded when these new curricular foci are introduced, or where they should be placed in the total pattern of instruction. A comprehensive high school in suburban Chicago, for example, has 252 courses. Educational reform in the 1980s should not simply add new layers and functions around existing ones. What is needed is a balancing of functions, a realism in claims, and a focus on a core curriculum that schools can actually implement. The California State Board of Education, for example, will now request all school districts to review the high-school courses offered, how many students are taking them, the quality of instructional materials, and whether coherent sequences in science and literature are offered. The Board will no longer restrict its textbook adoptions to books with a low readability level.

Numerous studies demonstrate that an increase in academic instructional time will lead to higher achievements in the academic content covered. If the recommendations outlined above were implemented, a national trend might begin to increase achievement scores in standardized tests and state assessment programs (assuming the tests are congruent with the renewed emphasis on academic rigor). Some increase in dropouts might result from a better articulated curriculum with fewer electives and higher standards. But, as Husen noted,

> In summing up the analyses of the possible factors in the school arena, it is concluded that the strongest explanatory power seems to come from curricular changes. There has been a considerable enrollment drop in U.S. high school courses in English and math. Furthermore, the course enrollment decline is paralleled by a drop in mean scores.[32]

Postsecondary education sets a poor example and in important ways provides negative incentives for secondary school standards. The abolition of college graduation standards over the past decade diminishes the need for high-school preparation in subject areas no longer required for the college degree. Colleges duplicate high-school courses in many areas, so students know they can make up academic gaps. Many colleges do not communicate to prospective students the consequences of taking minimum academic high-school course loads. In sum, the leadership for improved academic standards must come from an alliance of higher and lower education through state by state forums. California has formed a Roundtable of all levels in the education system to formulate overall policies on the standards issue, but the different levels have not yet communicated with one another or attempted to formulate articulated policies.

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Political Strategies to Build Public Support

Positive pupil attainments from these suggested changes can be used to galvanize political support for increased state aid to local schools. Without increased funding, however, greater academic emphasis can only take away from the special programs for the disadvantaged and handicapped. A threatening, more competitive social and economic context requires outstanding political understanding and insight on the part of education leaders. Education groups will have to work even harder through the traditional political processes of lobbying and elections. Campaign contributions and campaign work for state political candidates will become increasingly important. Since there is little hope for large-scale federal increases, political activity will have to focus on state government, especially in Sunbelt localities with an expanding property base. If public school finance continues to increase in terms of the percentage of state support, local tax referenda may become less important. In Florida, where the largest portion of the population consists of retirees who contend that they have already paid once for education in some other state, local educators have reluctantly supported *de facto* full state assumption of school finance. The future in many states may look very much like this.

Local voter turnout and referenda analysis will become less important than interest group activity at the state level. A great deal will depend on the willingness of educators to coalesce and to include allies such as child care and child health advocates. Fiscal outcomes will depend on state by state developments and on the effectiveness of state political leadership to fashion coalitions. The political split between parents and teachers in many states needs to be bridged. Should education leaders be unable to coalesce and instead engage in internecine warfare, a much lower rate of school expenditure increases than in the period from 1970 to 1980 will inevitably result. Moreover, education often consumes between 40 and 70 percent of state budgets, and thus will be vulnerable to spending limitation initiatives in states that have direct voting on such issues. Education's best fiscal strategy is militant state electoral politics, with heavy emphasis on campaign contributions and grass roots workers. Much of the effort expended at the national level by organized teachers, for example, should be redirected to state political campaigns and lobbying. Educators should follow the example of the Moral Majority and target special campaign efforts for specific friends or enemies (e.g., tuition-tax-credit advocates).

There is the danger that retrenchment and militant political action will increase the loss of public confidence in education. There could be a backlash against education as merely another special interest using its political muscle to enhance narrow self-interest. Unless there is a renewed loyalty to public education as a public good, essential for civic learning and the instilling of democratic values, militant education interest groups will be unable to attract a broad base of followers.[33] Education reformers and pressure groups have focused in recent years on particular targets such as handicaps, bilingualism, or decentralization, with little communication or agreement on the central goals of the institution they sought to change. Given the foreseeable trends in American society, an alliance of particular education interests will not be sufficient for the 1980s.

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DAVID K. COHEN AND BARBARA NEUFELD

The Failure of High Schools and the Progress of Education

FOR MANY AMERICANS, THE VERDICT IS IN: the high schools are failing. Americans are better educated and have higher standards of living than ever, but popular magazines and academic journals attack the decline of academic standards. Public schools have made considerable progress toward equality for students from poor or minority backgrounds in recent decades, yet newspapers feature stories about student disobedience and violence.[1] More high-school students than ever are working, yet educators fret about the "weakening connection" between school and work. For many, the evidence is convincing. In the sixties we worried chiefly about elementary schools and concentrated most improvement efforts there. Toward the end of the decade the problems of adolescence began to claim more attention, and within a few years collective attention seemed riveted on the disobedience of teenagers and the disasters in their schools. Since then the news has been steadily bad.

The high schools *are* a paradox, yet there has been little debate about the diagnosis of failure. There has, however, been considerable dispute about what caused the problems. Among the most popular explanations are a decline in the quality of teaching, the growth of an anti-intellectual "youth culture," the replacement of reading by viewing, and the daily curriculum of explicit sex, violence, and insubordination offered by television and movies. The decline of the family, for several centuries Americans' favorite explanation for whatever ails them, is also high on the list. Each of these accounts has something to recommend it, but each evokes a time when things generally did work well.[2] The satisfactions of this belief about the past seem to be a partial compensation for the sense that our time is out of joint.

Appealing as these explanations may be, we prefer a contrary notion—namely, that the problems we see now are in good measure the result of past educational successes. Perhaps the most signal success of American public education has been providing nearly equal access to elementary and secondary school for all, an achievement quite distinct in human history. The high schools have been charged with providing equal education since early in this century, but for a long time students from the working class and from minority groups stayed away in disproportionately large numbers. As a result, high schools remained a special institution for many decades—special, because although they were open to the public and thus in some sense egalitarian, their enrollment was drawn heavily from those most willing and able to use the education provided.

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This special quality had a considerable impact on the importance attributed to high-school education and to the seriousness with which all concerned treated it. In a sense, the public high school was not yet fully public. But high-school attendance grew during the century; by the 1960s nearly everyone of suitable age was enrolled in secondary school, and by the late 1970s roughly three out of every four were graduating.

As a result of these enrollment changes, the high schools have become much more fully public. And that has made them seem much less special in Americans' eyes, and much more problematic. In addition, the high schools have made adjustments in organization, curriculum, and standards to accommodate an increasingly diverse student population. One effect of these adjustments has been to make high-school education seem poorer, or less serious, or both.[3] Indeed, once high schools moved decisively toward universal attendance, Americans not only lost the sense that public high schools were a special, desirable institution, but they began also to view the high schools as a social problem, and began searching for more or better education elsewhere. In America, equality is at once an achievement to be celebrated and a degradation to be avoided.

This essay considers the current high-school problem by developing these ideas about secondary education. Our major theme concerns the paradoxes of educational equality in a competitive society. To explore this theme, we attempt a historical analysis of equality and inequality in U.S. secondary education. Our minor theme concerns the nature of social problem-solving, in education or elsewhere, and particularly the ways in which current problems are connected to past problem-solving efforts. The problems we see in secondary education today, for example, occur in high schools that have virtually universal attendance. Because social and economic inequalities in secondary attendance have been very sharply reduced, it is now easier to see the many problems of providing equal education for students from neglected or rejected segments of society. Yet we see these problems in high schools that were organized to solve other problems, and that worked in part because many of the potentially most difficult students did not attend. In present problem-solving we come to grips with the possibilities and limits of past efforts.[4] We can imagine these accumulated results as a sort of social geology, a layered configuration of ideas and institutions that limit what those living in any present can see—or do. Reform is always shaped, and often crippled, by the fruits of past problem-solving.

Equal Access in an Unequal Society

Public schools are one of the few American institutions that try to take equality seriously. Yet their service in this cause has been ambiguous and frequently compromised, for the schools are a public institution oriented to equality in a society dominated by private institutions oriented to the market. In the schools America seeks to foster equality—and individual Americans seek to realize it. But in the market, Americans seek to maintain or improve their economic and social position, thereby contributing to inequality even if they individually wish the reverse. This paradoxical relation between education and

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capitalism has had an enormous impact on the schools and on the role education plays in American life.

During the late nineteenth century the very meaning and social purpose of education changed in response to the growing importance of market relations, or perhaps in response to *beliefs* about their growing importance. For most of those who struggled to create public schools in the 1830s and 1840s, education was valued for its moral and political content. The common school crusaders sought to assure that all Americans would attend elementary school and would be exposed to the same curriculum. One view, associated with egalitarian hopes, was that such schools would reduce the effects of economic class divisions by educating children from different groups and classes in the same schools and distributing knowledge more equally among rich and poor. By providing equality of educational condition for children, common schools would help create an equality of political condition among adults, thereby improving the chances that the great experiment in political democracy would succeed.[5] Another view, associated with conservative fears, was that such schools would resocialize immigrants and the poor to instill the appropriate beliefs about crime, private property, obedience, and work. In this view, schools would inculcate those beliefs that conservative reformers thought families and churches were no longer instilling effectively. In either view, schools were understood as a moral and political force, an agency for affecting beliefs, ideas, and political relations. And in either view also, schools were important because they would strengthen community ties.

With the growth of industrial capitalism, however, education came to be valued more in technical and economic terms. Part of the folklore of modernization is the notion that specialized technical knowledge is the key to economic development. This idea took hold powerfully in America, and by the early part of this century it was already an article of faith that special technical knowledge was the key to prosperity in the modern age. The flowering of this idea brought a wave of enthusiasm for science, technology, and the professions, and a passion for specialized formal education. One early fruit of this enthusiasm was a remarkable multiplication in the 1890s of career-oriented high-school courses in accounting, secretarial work, surveying, drafting, and similar fields.

Another theme in the folklore of modernization, especially pronounced in the United States, was the view of life as capitalist competition. Entrepreneurial success stories became a staple of popular culture in the late nineteenth century, and small epics of competitive success dotted newspapers and magazines. As visions of rags-to-riches infected the American imagination, competitive success became a popular commodity. Capitalist competition was democratized—it was not only the preserve of Rockefellers, Carnegies, and Morgans, nor did success depend on the accumulation of such gargantuan fortunes. Ordinary families could compete on a more lifelike scale, among other ways, by "investing in the future" with more education for their children. And schoolpeople, struggling to find a place in the new world of modern industry and competition, began to advertise education as a technical preparation for economic success. The 1890s saw the first large flowering of the notion, later to become dogma, that schooling and the formal, technical knowledge it imparted were essential commodities in capitalist competition, commodities required for the economy's

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advance, for any individual's economic advantage, and for stable social organization. The social meaning of schooling was transformed: schools, formerly an agent of moral cohesion and political equality, became the agency for forming "human capital."[6]

This changed vision of education affected the spirit in which Americans went to school: educational attainment became a crucial step in the race for economic and social position. This, in turn, had an enormous impact on American conceptions of equality. Its first manifestation came around the turn of the century, when the older policy of universal elementary schooling began to approach realization. The common school crusaders had assumed that, with few exceptions, eight years of education would be all that most Americans needed. But as the elementary schools filled up in the increasingly competitive atmosphere of the late nineteenth century, the realization of this egalitarian dream encouraged many middle-class and lower-middle-class Americans to believe that finishing elementary school was no longer enough for their children. They began to see the lack of high schools as a social problem. Americans who were eager to have their children make a better place for themselves thought that sending them to high school was one way to do it. There they could get more education, and it would be more specialized than that of elementary schools, giving high-school students an edge in competition for jobs and social status. Educators echoed and stimulated these sentiments with now-familiar arguments about the ever increasing requirements for ever more highly trained labor in modern societies. The changes were swift. Public high schools were an uncommon institution as late as the 1870s and 1880s, with selective admission, based on entrance exams, and modest enrollments. But they fast became popular, especially among the middle and lower middle classes. Between 1870 and 1900 enrollment increased six and a half times, from 80,000 to 519,000. High schools sprang up like mushrooms after a spring rain. In 1870 there were about five hundred public high schools; in 1900 there were about six thousand.[7] Most important, entrance requirements were changed: the admissions exams were dropped in favor of simple elementary school completion. This marked the beginning of the high schools' transition from an elite to a mass institution. It marked the beginning of the end of the half-century struggle to provide universal elementary education. And it marked the beginning of a long struggle for a new social goal—universal high-school attendance.

In a certain sense, then, the expansion of public high-school enrollment was a solution to the "problem" of universal elementary attendance. This last became a problem partly because, although growing numbers of Americans wanted to provide their children with a social and economic advantage beyond the elementary education that more and more were completing, they could not finance private education or did not have access to it. Public high schools supported by everyone's taxes offered these families the hope that their children could still enjoy a competitive advantage over all the others who were rapidly filling the elementary school; at the least, they offered the promise of a decent competitive position vis-à-vis one another. In addition, attending the "people's college" permitted families of the middling sort a favorite democratic pastime—the opportunity to emulate the monied classes, and perhaps, who knew, even to pursue them to the heights.

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NEW DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION

This was the first in a long series of uneasy accommodations between the old democratic goals of equal access and universal attendance and the competitive economic meaning that became attached to school achievement later in the century. Americans have pursued equal access enthusiastically, but their beliefs about the competitive importance of schooling also have encouraged them to pursue policies and practices that pull in the opposite direction. One example of this, noted just above, has been the persistent tendency to greet the approaching achievement of equal access at any level of the school system with fevered enthusiasm for more education at the next higher level. Upward expansion protects competitive advantages for those who can purchase more schooling, but it also reduces the value of the soon to be universally held lower diploma, thus creating a relative disadvantage for those who cannot afford more schooling. Inequality, reduced at one level, is simply moved up a notch.

Further evidence of competition has been the effort to protect competitive advantages by means of internal differentiation, especially within the transitional level of schooling. Within two or three decades of the outbreak of the high-school fever, for example, skyrocketing enrollments brought an increasingly diverse population into secondary schools. Although students from middle-class and lower-middle-class families were still much overrepresented, more and more children from working-class backgrounds were enrolling. By the second decade of this century the high schools were on the way to becoming a mass institution with a quite diverse population. To accommodate these developments within the framework of intensifying competition over education, the schools dramatically changed their internal organization. Secondary schools had begun to multiply their offerings in the 1880s and 1890s to meet their students' more varied academic and occupational interests, but the basis of assignment was student choice. Shortly after the turn of the century the high schools were reorganized in a stratified fashion on the basis of student ability and occupational destination, with educators claiming much more authority over student assignment. Both the curriculum and the schools' organization were reshaped, roughly along the lines of the American class structure. Preparation for professional and technical jobs was allocated to academic and college entrance tracks, while preparation for lesser jobs was handled by several other curricula, ranging from general through clerical to vocational and manual trades. The social-prestige structure within the high schools followed this hierarchy. Educators spun elaborate technocratic fantasies, advertising the new organization as the centerpiece of the industrial system, a finely tuned mechanism designed to finish its human "raw materials" according to the varied skill demands of different occupational strata and to channel the finished products toward their proper occupational destination.[8] If overheated prose could have done the trick, schoolmen would have taken their place at the tables of the mighty, making weighty decisions about the destiny of the industrial system and those toiling in it.

Although no such reshuffling occurred, there was a radical redefinition of educational equality. The older doctrine of equality of condition was amended,

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or partly replaced, by a doctrine of equal opportunity. The former had stressed the importance of mixed attendance in common schools and exposure to a common curriculum as means of reducing the educational and political effects of economic inequality. It also had assumed rough equality of educational achievement—eight years of school attendance should be enough for nearly everyone. The newer doctrine of equal opportunity, by contrast, stressed the importance of exposing high-school students to different curricula in order to prepare them for the different work they would do as adults. And the new doctrine did not assume that schools would reduce the effects of class difference: schools would accept the class structure as a requirement of industrial efficiency and would train students for their places in it. Equality meant fair chances to compete for the best places in the occupational hierarchy, not equal exposure to the same curriculum. And the fairness of these chances would, in principle, hinge on "scientific" determinations of ability, as measured by IQ tests. Students with higher scores were assumed to be better suited for the top tracks in school and society, while those with lower scores were thought to be destined for smaller futures. If one were to believe the arguments of American educators at the time, the high schools were becoming paragons of meritocratic efficiency, making fair determinations about who was best for what, and training them accordingly.[9]

Things did not work out quite that way, but for a time the new ideas and organization held sway. The high schools certainly were seen as a great success, and enrollments continued to climb through the first half of this century. Americans could agree on the value of high-school attendance without facing hard questions about how the new organization actually worked and how it would affect the allocation of competitive advantages. One reason for this agreement was simply that the notion of fair competition had great appeal among those at the bottom of the heap as well as those better situated to compete. Another was that the new doctrines were implemented in a very imperfect fashion, leaving more room for teachers' judgments, parents' wishes, and students' interests than the technocratic fantasies would suggest. Still another reason for the broad agreement on the fairness of differentiated high schools was that, though testing and tracking were problematic in many ways, the high schools in which they occurred did represent appreciably increased opportunity for many American families. Some high school was better than no high school for many Americans newly arrived or from poor families, and the opportunity to crack the top track by means of a scientific test was better than no opportunity at all. Only a few voices rose to challenge the scientific validity of the tests or their fairness, or to question the extent to which testing and tracking passed on economic and social advantages from one generation to another. Walter Lippmann mounted perhaps the most cogent attack on the tests; George Counts exposed class bias in high-school curriculum assignment and graduation; and the Chicago Labor Federation attacked testing on the grounds that it discriminated against workers' children.[10] Had anyone wanted to listen, the arguments were there to be heard. But these dissenting voices found few others to amplify their message or carry it on.

Another reason that Americans could agree on the value of the new high-school education was the many students who did not get it. As long as those

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adolescents who did not care for school, and those from the most oppressed and deprived segments of the society, were mostly absent, the schools were not hard-pressed to figure out how to educate their most difficult potential students. As long as those for whom schooling was as much a problem as an opportunity stayed away in droves, it was hard to imagine the difficulties in providing them with a usable secondary education. As long as not graduating from high school remained socially legitimate, these adolescents could easily see other paths, and when there were jobs, take them. All of this meant that, prior to attendance laws, high schools were still schools of choice. They were still special, which in capitalist America meant that they were seen as a selective institution, middle class and white, not as a universally subscribed institution, proletarian and minority.

One consequence of selectivity concerned the terms on which education could be offered and received: it was harder for students to object to unfairness in education, and easier for educators to insist that the students who came play by the schools' rules. Because the institution was in some sense not yet fully public, the implied contract between students and schools was much stiffer than it has become, and easier to enforce. Schools could get more of the commitment they wanted from students because so many potential students were elsewhere.

Another consequence of selective high-school attendance earlier in this century was that no one could see the great problems that would arise if the crusade for universal secondary attendance succeeded. As is often the case with policies of equal provision, it is easy to overestimate their advantages, and easier still to underestimate their limitations, when only partial coverage has been achieved. The limits of equal access policies are really clear only when, once access is equalized, the results stubbornly remain much more unequal than had been hoped. This realization is at the core of current ideas about the high-school problem, just as it was at the core of turn-of-the-century ideas about elementary school problems. Selective coverage under a policy of universal access has more than once allowed Americans to think they could have their cake and eat it, too. Their disappointment when others, less fortunate, try to take their own slice is an old story, but like many such stories, it apparently must be experienced anew each time to be believed.

THE HIGH-SCHOOL PROBLEM TAKES SHAPE

In the first half of this century, then, Americans struggled to realize the promise of secondary education for all. Yet the closer they came to success, the more evident the problematic consequences of equality became; the more nearly universal secondary education became, the more this seeming victory for equality took on the color of a competitive defeat. In 1900 only slightly more than six out of every one hundred seventeen-year-olds graduated from high school; by 1930 the figure had risen to nearly thirty; and by 1950 it was fifty-nine.[11]

One result of these enrollment increases was that the social definition of high school changed radically between 1930 and 1950: by 1950 one was a failure if one did not graduate. The "high-school dropout" became a term of opprobrium as the high-school diploma became the new social minimum. A second result

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was that the focus of competition began to shift to postsecondary schools. High school was no longer enough—more education began to seem a necessity. College attendance zoomed upward, from 1.1 million in 1930 to 2.6 million in 1950. By 1960 attendance was 3.2 million. In these decades college became what high schools had been in the two decades embracing the turn of this century—the new arena for competition over education, an arena in which American families of middle-class and lower-class origins struggled to maintain their children's competitive advantage vis-à-vis those around them or below. Between the thirties and the fifties such families began to work and sacrifice on a large scale to provide higher education for their children, just as an earlier generation had struggled to accomplish this at the secondary level. Their endeavors helped to press the expansion of public higher education into a mass system and to support the allocation of state tax monies to help finance free education at state universities, just as similarly situated families had supported the use of local taxes for public high schools a generation or two earlier. And as before, while these developments expressed what might be termed class conflict, the conflict was not overt. The ethic of fair competition was widely accepted, and in certain important respects it worked. Both high schools and public colleges did become broadly available, and many children from lower-middle-class and working-class families did make it in—and up. From one perspective, then, raising the level of economic and social competition over education yet another notch seemed to do the trick—for a few decades at least. The competitive problems produced by approaching universal high-school attendance were deferred once again, as the focus of competition shifted upward to universities.

The rapid expansion of high schools had a variety of important indirect effects. One of these concerned elementary education. Once high schools began to assume the main burden of what is now termed "preparation for adulthood," a more relaxed approach to elementary school became possible. For most students in the late nineteenth century, elementary school was the only institutional step between childhood and work. Educators were therefore much interested in how elementary schools could help prepare their students for work in the new industrial age.[12] But within a few decades the high schools began to take over the burden of preparation for adulthood, and with this change, the elementary schools' mission began to shift: once the grammar school certificate was no longer the terminal degree, the competitive pressures on elementary schools started to diminish. The lower schools grew somewhat more open to new ideas about democracy and variations in individual development. Such ideas had been discussed and explored on a modest scale in the United States since the mid-1800s, but the progress of child-centered education was considerably enhanced by the growing sense, early in this century, that working life did not begin right after elementary school. This notion gained force as high-school enrollments grew during the twentieth century. Child-centered practices gained a larger foothold in the elementary schools, along with efforts to eliminate ability grouping, to remove vocational elements from the curriculum, to create a less competitive climate in classrooms, and to establish a less competitive and more egalitarian basis for treating students.[13] These changes in elementary schools have regularly been contested on the grounds that they were only a

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relaxation of academic standards to accommodate a more diverse student population. That was often the case, but despite these arguments, child-centered reform has made continuing, though not steady, headway since early in this century. More relaxed schooling became possible at the elementary level as long as the market-oriented competition was maintained in the high schools.

A second indirect effect of rapidly increasing secondary school enrollment appeared in Americans' vision of the high school. By 1950 roughly seventy-seven out of every hundred adolescents old enough for high school were enrolled, a huge jump over the figure just two decades earlier. And a disproportionately large part of the increase comprised black students and those from poor families. In consequence, in the 1950s the high schools became a social problem. Prior to that time the chief problem of secondary education that occupied popular attention had been getting more students to attend. But once attendance was well on the way to becoming universal, the situation was reversed: high schools themselves, rather than the lack of students in them, became the problem.

The history of the high-school problem began in the 1950s, then, and appropriately enough, in its first incarnation the problem seemed to be a decline in the quality of education, a weakening of the curriculum, and a relaxation of academic standards. University academics from Arthur Bestor[14] to Jerrold Zacharias attacked the quality of education. With the launch of *Sputnik*, federal funds for improved curriculum and teaching followed in short order, especially in science and language, and exclusively for college-bound students. In 1959 James Conant's *The American High School Today*[15] was published, attacking the low quality of education available and proposing the creation of large consolidated schools to improve offerings. Perhaps Conant's chief concern was the education of academically talented students, which he felt was slipping badly. The book was a great success. The tone in these developments was nicely captured by the central query of John Gardner's *Excellence* in 1961: "Can we be equal and excellent too?"[16]

In the mid-1960s concern about the quality of secondary education shifted briefly from excellence for the talented to equality for the disadvantaged. Indeed, the high-school problem temporarily receded during Lyndon Johnson's presidency, overshadowed by broader worries about the caliber of education generally available to the poor and to minorities, and by a sense that intervention earlier in children's lives was crucial. But by the late 1960s the high-school problem had returned, this time in a somewhat different incarnation; it now seemed to center in student protest, school disorder, and drugs. A panel of President Nixon's Science Advisory Council headed by James Coleman produced *Youth: Transition to Adulthood*[17] in 1973, a volume that announced the existence of a separate "youth culture" that tended to create hostility to adults and work and that shielded adolescents from proper socialization to adulthood. High schools were a central villain in Coleman's vision of the problem, for in his view these schools reinforced the youth culture by isolating students from the social and economic realities of adult life. Coleman prescribed a range of endeavors to break down the barriers between school and work, to reduce the school's grip on youth, and to promote more contact between adolescents and adults—a category in Coleman's analysis that seemed not to include high-school

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teachers. Other reports during these years proposed dismantling the large comprehensive schools that had been built partly in response to Conant's book, and to get high-school students out of school by reducing compulsory attendance requirements.

Since *Youth: Transition to Adulthood*, the high-school problem has resumed something like its earlier guise. In the mid-1970s attention was focused on the decline of SAT scores, a phenomenon extensively reported in the national press and repeatedly investigated by blue-ribbon panels and academic experts. Although the actual scope and origin of the decline remain in doubt, most commentators held that the lowering of academic standards in high schools was an important cause. Frank Armbruster, a defense analyst and a colleague of Herman Kahn at the Hudson Institute, published an extensive attack on liberal curriculum reform and progressive teaching methods in high schools. He regarded these as prime causes of the decline of test scores.[18]

Later in the decade attention turned to what some observers saw as an explosion of private secondary schools. The growth of Christian academies, among others, seemed evidence to many commentators that the public high schools could no longer educate for "character," as presumably they had once done. The moral failures of high-school education now occupy center stage. James Coleman has just published another study, this one of public and private high schools. The results, he announced, show that private school students produce better academic work than similarly situated public school students, and that they do so because private schools are better able to enforce a moral climate in schools oriented to achievement.[19] *Character*, a journal concerned with high schools and their students, recently began publication. If anything, concern about high-school problems appears to be growing. The Carnegie Corporation of New York has just announced its support of two national studies of American high schools—one headed by Ernest Boyer, a former U.S. commissioner of education, the other, by Theodore Sizer, a former dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Education and, until recently, headmaster at Phillips Andover.

THE PARADOX OF EQUALITY

The sense that there is a grave high-school problem is thus itself one effect of the changes in American high schools that came about as the schools became more equal, at least in enrollment. In part this is due to the anxieties that accompany egalitarian achievements in a highly competitive society. With only one exception, American attention to high-school problems since 1950 has been focused principally on the problems of advantaged students; and those worrying about the problem have, with few exceptions, been drawn chiefly from the intelligentsia, not the working class or minority groups.

But, the worries about academic standards have also been a sane response to the paradoxical consequences of equality in U.S. education. Viewed from one perspective, by reducing great inequalities of access, America has made great strides in secondary education since World War II. By 1979 state reports showed that roughly ninety-nine out of every hundred students were enrolled in secondary schools, and that about seventy-five out of every one hundred

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seventeen-year-olds were graduating from high school.[20] These developments mean that inherited economic and social status is no longer as powerful a determinant of high-school completion as it once was, though those who do not graduate are still disproportionately drawn from society's lower orders. There has also been a dramatic reduction in racial disparities in high-school attendance; black-white gaps in attendance and graduation have closed considerably, though blacks are still overrepresented among those who do not complete high school. And these enrollment changes reflect changes in policy and practice vis-à-vis children with physical and emotional handicaps. The passage of Public Law 94-142 was only the most recent and far-reaching of recent efforts to make education available to all students.[21]

As attendance has expanded, so have the services schools provide. Children who once could not attend school because there were no appropriate programs or physical facilities can attend, because schools now have such programs and facilities or are trying to provide them. Also, many children with less severe handicaps who were in school but were not receiving special help now have educational programs designed to meet their needs. And as recent immigration has once again expanded America's language minorities, legislative and judicial actions have considerably enlarged the schools' responsibilities in dealing with such minorities. All of these steps and others signal an expansion of equality and at least partial fulfillment of earlier hopes for education.[22]

But because these victories for equality occurred in the context of intense competition over education, the competitive response to equality has tarnished the victory in several respects. The expansion of higher education meant that more equality was possible at lower levels because inequality was now maintained in postsecondary schools. This, in turn, meant that egalitarian gains in public secondary schools became possible largely because the A.B. superseded the high-school degree as the diploma of merit. In effect, the competitive zeal for higher education debased the value of the high-school diploma, just as the zeal for high school had earlier deflated the value of an elementary education. Gains for equality seem real enough, but because they occur in the context of fierce competition over schooling, they are compromised as they are being made. Education is more equal in one respect, but it also is devalued in response to equality.

Historically, this paradox has been most clear in the changes in curriculum and in requirements for graduation that have accompanied increasingly universal access to high school. In the case of curriculum, as more and more immigrants and working-class children attended high schools early in this century, educators began to move the focus of high-school studies away from traditional academic work toward what they judged to be the "practical" needs of such students. By the end of World War I the announced aim of high schools, according to a national blue-ribbon panel of educators, was to "adjust" students to the practical requirements of their lives as citizens and workers.[23] Although some educators continued to follow Charles Eliot and his earlier Report from the Committee of Ten, holding that rigorous intellectual training was important to all students because it taught them how to think, more and more educators argued that such training was useless for everyday life. One essential element in this view was the belief that the new students in the high

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schools were unable to cope with a serious academic curriculum. Ideas about the new students' mental capacity had been shaped in part by results of standardized tests that had been devised and administered during the first two decades of the century. On the basis of these tests, particularly those given to army recruits during World War I, many educators concluded that 60 percent of high-school students were not bright enough to benefit from the academic curriculum of the high school. Instead, it was thought that they could benefit from a less demanding course of study geared to their "interests" and "needs." Course offerings of this sort multiplied in high schools early in the century, and requirements for English, mathematics, and foreign language study were slowly relaxed.

But if the presumed deficiencies of working-class and immigrant youth were one inspiration for these changes, the reorientation of curriculum toward the "practical" was not confined to the lower high-school tracks. As time passed, antipathy to academic training grew. With the "life adjustment education" movement that thrived in the thirties, many educators questioned the value of traditional academic training for all students, even the brightest. As a result, the less demanding, more diverse curriculum was gradually extended to all high-school tracks. In several cities the responsibility for rigorous academic training began to pass from the academic tracks of all comprehensive high schools to a few specialized academic schools—the so-called examination high schools.

The argument between advocates of practical and academic training has been a long one and continues to the present. On the whole, however, the drift has been toward the practical, and in the course of the debate, the content of the positions has changed. In particular, the meaning of academic rigor has seriously eroded. For example, the return to academic rigor is currently espoused by those who want greater emphasis placed on "basic skills"; but one of the chief ambitions of this back-to-basics movement is to make sure that high-school graduates can fill out a simple income tax form or a job application. That conception of the aims of academic rigor is a far cry from that of Charles Eliot.

These changes in curriculum have been accompanied by a gradual relaxation of standards for promotion and graduation, principally by means of social promotion. Although historical evidence on this point is scarce, it appears that the practice of advancing students from year to year on the basis of age, rather than on the satisfactory completion of academic requirements, first became widespread in elementary schools around the turn of this century, as a means of dealing with the consequences of universal attendance. The practice was extended to the nonacademic tracks of high schools, when filling up these tracks became the high schools' first response to a more diverse and less select student body early in this century. In the 1930s life adjustment education provided a rationale for extending the practice to all high-school tracks, just as high-school attendance was being swelled by large numbers of students, especially those from poor and working-class families. And after World War II, when high-school attendance became more universal, social promotion appears to have become a nearly universal means of dealing with large numbers of students whose academic performance was insufficient to warrant promotion on academic grounds. By the 1960s, if students did not graduate from high school, it was more likely to be the result of nonattendance than of failing to pass through the

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grades. Social promotion is a way of coping with the effects of more equal attendance, though at the cost of debasing the value of the high-school diploma.

Taken by themselves, these changes have probably had a corrosive effect on academic performance. But to complicate matters further, it appears that as the high-school curriculum has been simplified over the decades, standards for literacy have been rising.[24] When we speak of literacy today, we tend to mean the ability to read in order to learn something new, or more simply, to be able to follow written directions. However, not until the time of World War I did the ability to read silently and understand an unfamiliar text become the goal of mass education. Prior to this time literate individuals were those who could declaim familiar texts aloud. Getting new meaning from texts—in fact, getting *any* meaning from texts—was not the goal of reading instruction throughout the nineteenth century. Some educators encouraged reading for meaning, believing that it would make reading instruction more "palatable" to children, but their influence was not great.[25]

The pressure to change the old, simple conceptions of literacy and reading instruction grew slowly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the catalyst that first turned reading into a social problem was, again, the new standardized tests used on army recruits during World War I. When these tests were first given, a large proportion of recruits failed, even though they had completed enough years of schooling to support the assumption that they could read well enough to pass. However, the Army Alpha test required the reader to read silently and answer questions on new material. Reading instruction, as well as the definition of literacy, began to change, partly as a result of the test scores and partly in response to increasing levels of education in the population. The older definition of literacy slowly gave way to one that demanded a higher standard of achievement. But the tests that promoted a new and more difficult definition of literacy also convinced many educators, including the life adjustment advocates, that 60 percent of the population were not very bright. And this conviction reinforced efforts to water down the curriculum, including the slow decline of reading difficulty in textbooks over at least the last thirty years. Thus standards of literacy have been rising as high-school reading requirements have been relaxed.[26]

TRANSFORMATION OF THE HIGH SCHOOLS

Access to high school has become more equal during the course of this century, but educators have responded by reforms that have sometimes debased the content of secondary education. These developments have been complicated by others that followed World War II, when high-school attendance rose to more than three quarters of those eligible. At that point high school was no longer the last step before work: soon more than half of the eligible population was going on to some form of postsecondary education. One effect of moving the competition for educational attainment up a notch to college was to create a more socially sheltered atmosphere for the high schools, much as the high-school fever deflected some competitive pressures from elementary schools, beginning earlier in this century. While postsecondary education may not become universal soon, its growth has encouraged expansion of the age

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boundaries of childhood. If high school is no longer the last stop before adulthood and work, then secondary students can be treated in a more informal and playful fashion. Deferring the immediacy of work defers the pressures of preparing for it, and permits a reinterpretation of the curriculum to suit students' intellectual or cultural interests. During the last fifteen years or so these tendencies have been reflected in eased course requirements and in less formal social relations between many faculty and students. Courses and study programs organized around ethnic and racial differences have blossomed; alternative high schools within public systems have grown up; and courses that seek to use various elements of pop culture to catch students' interest in deeper issues have become more popular. These developments have sometimes been accompanied by decreased academic rigor. Students in alternative programs have sometimes had few academic demands placed upon them; ethnic studies programs have sometimes been superficial or lacking in any element of study at all; and mini-courses on the detective novel or science fiction can never teach the more important elements of literature. In one sense, these reforms seem a step forward, since they are in part an effort to create a curriculum that is available to the very diverse student population that equal access has brought into the high schools. But in another sense they sometimes represent a dilution of curriculum, as education is extended to more students from the lower orders of society. Access is more equal, but the consequent upward expansion of child-centered education has often reduced the rigor of academic offering.

This paradox is complicated by another. The high schools are populated by people who are biologically adult, and in the upper grades these people have long been defined as nearly adult in social and economic terms. Moreover, they are treated as adults in many ways by the economy and the culture. Their dress, their sexual habits, their entertainment, the advertising directed at them, all make it difficult to distinguish eleventh and twelfth graders from people ten years their seniors. Yet the changes in curriculum and organization of their schools just described are reminiscent of elementary education: the high schools seem to be less "businesslike" and, therefore, in terms of American experience, less serious. These crosscurrents perplex students, teachers, and others concerned with secondary schools, for in the competitive context of American education, the recent expansion of child-centered education into secondary schools looks like a relaxation of standards for those newly arrived.

The more relaxed character of life in high schools is not a response to equality alone. Recent developments in the economy and the culture have given powerful impetus to changes in high schools. We pointed out earlier that high schools worked for a long time because many students for whom the high schools could not provide a decent education simply stayed away—or if they came, kept quiet. But those days have been gone for some time, and their disappearance brought a fundamental change in what people expect from school, and a change in how students use high schools. The economy has not been pulling many students out of the high schools into work for several decades now; in fact, youth unemployment rates have been steadily increasing. This is not exactly a new development; high-school enrollment fluctuated with unemployment rates in earlier times, but the only change in the rates for decades now has been upward. In addition, the long improvement in economic conditions

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and social welfare since the bleak days of the late nineteenth century has provided many families, even poor ones, with resources that have substantially eased former pressures on adolescents to take work, any kind of work, to keep their families afloat. These changes, along with the growth of a national culture oriented to middle-class and cosmopolitan tastes, have made many once-acceptable working-class jobs seem not only less acceptable, but also less necessary to accept. Education, among other factors, has helped convince many children of the working class and the poor that they deserve better jobs than they can find.[27]

These developments mean that although high-school attendance is virtually universal, it is not due to a desire for learning nor even to a hunger for the presumed economic fruits of schooling. Often it is simply the result of having nothing better to do. The high schools now have large numbers of students for whom school is a problem, a bore, the best entertainment available in a poor selection, or a necessary evil to be borne grudgingly. Students who cause trouble or who do not do the work are more difficult to suspend or expel when attendance is universal, a point that has been reinforced by recent court decisions. And problem students often cannot be tactfully counseled out, in part because often there is little to counsel them toward.

In response to these developments, students and faculty have been converting their schools into a different sort of institution, or perhaps only adding another facet to those already there. High schools are becoming a sort of state-supported social service center for adolescents at loose ends. In addition to the many other purposes they serve, these schools are increasingly being turned into a place to hang out, an alternative to the street, to unemployment, or to unattractive work—even a place to find some diverting activities in the absence of anything else to do. In some schools, for example, a federal program that had originally been intended to teach students about various career opportunities has been transformed, by students and teachers, into a means of getting adolescents out of school into part-time work[28]. Many local projects permitted students to gain academic credit for their work experience, and permitted the schools to remake—and sometimes water down—the curriculum to suit the needs of students who were academically marginal. The students were pleased to get part-time jobs through the school and to get credit for work—which in some cases did include writing about it. The schools were pleased to find a way to do something for some students who were bored or restless and frequently quite uninterested in academic work. In other schools, faculty members have tried to adapt to universal attendance by devising courses and other activities that will interest students, or by creating activity areas where students can gather without cluttering up the halls, or simply not bothering those who come to school to hang out and see their friends rather than to attend class.

The spontaneous transformation of secondary education from below is a fascinating adaptation of an institution to changes in the character and purposes of its clients. The changes reflect in part the way adolescents have found to cope with the eased pressures to work full time and with the increased pressure to attend school. They also reflect the schools' efforts to adapt to universal attendance and to the increasing difficulty of getting students out of school by other means than giving them a diploma. In practice, the definition of equality

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that has developed in American secondary education has left less and less room for schools to control student exit on grounds of achievement, a change that fits nicely with the more relaxed standards for academic performance and social deportment associated with the upward spread of child-centered reforms.

These changes in high schools have softened both academic and social standards. They have tended to weaken the value of the high-school diploma and to convey the sense that secondary education is less special—and less serious—than was once the case. But if the changes have pressed high schools in some new directions, they occur within an institution whose organization still embodies the old assumption that high school is a serious competition for educational achievements that will bring real economic rewards. The result has been to put into clearer relief the contradictions that riddle American high schools. The old assumptions are still dominant in official ideology and organization, but they are contradicted by new practices that seek peace with changed conditions. The schools thus profess both rigorous academic work and relaxed experiences, respect for the classical curriculum and regard for the mini-course. They proclaim the economic value of academic struggle, yet they do so in the midst of an economic situation that seems to belie the proclamation. Indeed, the images of capitalist competition that once inspired and accompanied so much of the struggle for high-school education now seem a sad, even wicked parody.

While the high schools are thus more of a puzzle, more a bundle of contradictory tendencies than ever before, students and faculty must somehow make sense of these contrary tendencies in their daily activities. For the first time in history the schools must contend with a large number of students who explicitly doubt that participating in the great academic competition will do them much good. Many reject the idea outright. And as belief that the competition makes sense declines, the legitimacy of the schools' organization becomes less convincing. Of course, ever since early in the century there have been many students who knew that the competition was loaded against them, but some accepted it, hoping to make their way and perhaps even change its terms. Others accepted it even when ground down by it, because the selective character of attendance made challenges difficult. But recent developments have made it much easier to challenge the high schools' organization and the ideas it embodies. The high schools have been at the center of political storms for two decades now, storms that often centered specifically on minority students or on issues close to them: desegregation; student rights; fair treatment of the handicapped; bilingual education; and more. In each of these cases the schools have come in for more explicit political criticism than ever before in their history: the discriminatory and often racist character of education in the United States has been well ventilated, and the schools' treatment of less fortunate members of society has been under steady attack. These attacks have been fundamental in character, raising explicit questions about the legitimacy of the enterprise. Challenges from the world of adult politics have spilled over into the everyday life of schools—in strikes, street demonstrations, court injunctions, and the like.

All this provides students with a political education of no mean importance, and raises doubts in the minds of students and teachers about the character and usefulness of their work. Academic and popular attacks on the legitimacy of

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both academic and capitalist competition have become easy and even fashionable, and have weakened the old assumption that doing well in school garners economic rewards in adult life. Whether researchers argue that schools do little to reduce economic inequality, or that schools do much to maintain and harden inequality, or that the economic returns of schooling have been exaggerated—whether or not schools increase equality[29]—these challenges reinforce what students and teachers know about the economy, youth unemployment, and the like. Along with the broader conflicts that have been played out in schools, they have encouraged students and teachers to produce their own challenges, in the small political life of classrooms, in teachers' meetings, and the like. By now many students and faculty simply do not believe that the institution is fair, or that it is organized to serve them respectfully or well. For the first time many are willing to say so.

Awareness of social problems can be helpful in solving them. But the greater politicization of students and faculty itself contributes to the problems of high schools, because there is now a more widespread and forceful sense in the schools that they are in trouble—perhaps, in some sense, even illegitimate—and this makes them less viable. In many schools, teachers and administrators must work harder than ever to gain or maintain authority. The problems of inequality in education are now more visible to students and teachers. This awareness has made the schools livelier but in certain respects more difficult places to work.

High School Reform?

Ours is not the only way to tell the story. High-school problems appear in a variety of distinct and vivid terms to those embroiled in them. Teachers may see them as a collapse of interest in academic work or as a loss of faith in teachers. Administrators worry about an upswing of defiant behavior. Parents are distressed that their children seem to take school so lightly and to disdain the path by which they made their way. Others see a loss of nerve or a relaxation of larger competitive energies. Whatever the diagnosis, together these ideas have once again added up to a sense of crisis in the high schools, to heated opposition to some recent developments, and to cries for reform. Some partisans focus on the quality of instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics; others object to recent curriculum reforms on the grounds that mini-courses and studies of academically marginal material reduce the opportunity to learn more basic subject matter; still others attack the new interest in ethnic studies as irrelevant or worse. And some reject these innovations as racist or discriminatory because they relax standards for minority groups or the poor while leaving more demanding work available to advantaged students. The objecting teachers, parents, and public officials support a list of counterreforms, perhaps the most popular being minimum competency testing. Advocates hope that these new tests will provide incentives for students and teachers to work harder. There is a revived interest in teaching "basic skills," in private schools, and in religious education.

These school wars sometimes caricature sane reform impulses. The minimum competency testing movement, for example, has spawned tests that are poorly made and that lack sensitivity to school curricula. To the extent that

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such tests affect anything besides the fleeting contents of the daily newspaper's front page, they seem likely to degrade teaching and to turn sensible efforts to improve learning into defensive rearguard actions against badly constructed exams. And there are plenty of counterparts on the other side of the educational barricades—mini-courses on science fiction as literature or local history study that consists largely of neighborhood walks. These examples and the passions they stir up are only the most recent version of old shoot-outs that began over elementary education with Froebel, Colonel Parker, John Dewey, and their many enemies. The schools are a great theater in which we play out these conflicts in the culture; they are a stage for the long war over the character of adult life that Americans prefer to wage on the friendlier terrain of childhood. Generations of ordinary Americans have had front row seats, and often leading parts, as the opposing battalions drew up their forces at PTA or school board meetings. We know many of the roles and leading players; even the lines are by now quite familiar.

These reforms will undoubtedly affect high schools, some for the better and others not. But we doubt that the current crop of changes will produce fundamental improvements, because none respond to the dilemma these schools face: secondary education has made substantial advances in the direction of equality, but this has eroded the sense that high schools are special institutions with valuable things to offer those who labor in them. Without greater equality, the fundamental political promises America offers would remain hollow and defeating; but without the sense that their schools are special, valuable, and worth sacrificing for, students and teachers cannot generate the mutual commitment that every school and classroom must have if it is to be a good place to learn. The high schools have moved far in the direction of equal access, but because these steps occurred in the context of fierce social and economic competition, advances for equality have been accompanied by the gradual debasement of secondary education. This debasement lies partly in the eyes of beholders who have difficulty believing that an equal institution can be excellent, and partly in the dilution of academic standards by educators and communities who cannot believe that excellent and demanding education is possible for most students. Public high schools cannot be made better by turning back the clock, reversing the fundamental gains for equality that have been made—though many who turn to private education or who worry about reinstating education for "character" seem to think that such movement is possible. On the contrary, that would almost surely further debase the character of public secondary education, either by depriving it of a democratic public or by eroding these schools' sense of special value even more. Basic improvements in public high schools may require real inventiveness, designed to endow institutions that are public and universal with the sense that they are also institutions of special value, unique and attractive to students and teachers. Perhaps means can be found to marry equality with a sense of institutional uniqueness. If so, high schools could create and release the mutual commitment that is required for good teaching and learning.

REFERENCES

We are grateful to Jeanne Chall for discussing with us her work on the possible connections between the difficulty of textbooks and student SAT scores and for directing us to other work on

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that subject and on the broader topic of literacy. We also thank David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot for their cogent comments on an earlier draft of the paper. Especial thanks to Maria Sachs for maintaining her editorial wit through many revisions.

[1]The popular media have a long tradition of helping to shape the problems to which the public and then the schools respond. For example, Raymond Callahan, in *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), wrote: "That genuine problems existed in American society at the turn of the century there can be no doubt. But the generation of widespread public enthusiasm and indignation necessary to give force to a reform movement in a democratic society required that the public be aroused and informed. This function was performed so effectively by the muckraking journalists through the medium of low-priced periodicals that one historian has stated that "to an extraordinary degree the work of the Progressive movement rested upon its journalism" and that "it was muckraking that brought the diffuse malaise of the public into focus (p. 3)."

[2]It is important to note that Americans have a long tradition of finding fault with their schools: smooth-running schools share "a poverty of dramatic interest." (Harry S. Broudy. *The Real World of the Public Schools*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972.) What is more, the content of the complaints has remained remarkably constant over time—from the loss of discipline to standards in the curriculum. For example, although we think that discipline was firm in the past, examination of early school reports reveals that "in 1837 some three hundred teachers were driven out of their schools [in Massachusetts] by unruly and riotous pupils over whom, in spite of the prevalent use of the whip, they were unable to keep any semblance of order." (Merle Curti. *The Social Ideas of American Educators*. Paterson, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, 1963.) And "To play a trick on the master was an evidence of spirit; to 'lick' the master was to be crowned hero of Flat Creek district." (Edward Eggleston. *The Hoosier School-Master*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1957. Originally published, 1871.)

We assume that academic and student effort were greater in the past, yet as long ago as 1878 there were many who mourned the loss of the traditional curriculum and decried the institution of diverse course offerings, and believed that standards had dropped and students were being coddled. For example, "Very much of the teaching which I heard was, in a sense, too good. Everything was made so plain and so easy that there was no hard work left to the scholars. This struck me again and again in schools of every grade. . . . When [one geometry] Class was over, I asked the lady whether she believed that this was the right way of teaching mathematics, and whether she did not think the girls would derive more benefit from their studies if she left them to do more of the work themselves. She said: "When I was a girl, I was not helped in this way; I had to dig out everything as best I could; I was thrown upon myself; but the girls have so many subjects to study now that they would never get through their work unless they were taught as I have been teaching them. . . . with our present range of subjects we have no choice; the teachers must do everything for the scholars." (B. A. Hinsdale. *Our Common-Schools. A Fuller Statement of the Views Set Forth In the Pamphlet Entitled, Our Common-School Education*. Cobb, Andrews & Co. 1878.)

[3]It is important to note that each time access to education has been achieved for a new group, it is followed by a concern about what to teach them and with a subsequent cry that the standards of the schools are slipping. So, for example, during the Depression more students stayed in school longer since job opportunities were few. Schools diversified their curricular offerings to meet the needs of these students. These reforms were followed by claims that the schools had deteriorated. See Henry Perkinson, *The Imperfect Panacea: American Faith in Education, 1865-1965* (New York: Random House, 1968); Broudy, *The Real World of the Public Schools;* and David Tyack, "The High School as a Social Service Agency: Historical Perspectives on Current Policy Issues," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 1 (5) (1979), for a discussion of these patterns.

[4]What is more, the problems we choose to address are only a sample of the potential problems that could be defined. Herbert Blumer reminds us that "it is a gross mistake to assume that any kind of malignant or harmful social condition or arrangement in a society becomes automatically a social problem for that society. The pages of history are replete with instances of dire social conditions unnoticed and unattended in the societies in which they occurred. ("Social Problems as Collective Behavior," *Social Problems* 18 [3] [1971].)

[5]For example, see Benjamin Rush, who wrote: "I conceive the education of our youth in this country to be peculiarly necessary in Pennsylvania, while our citizens are composed of the natives of so many different kingdoms in Europe. Our schools of learning, by producing one general and uniform system of education, will render the mass of the people more homogeneous, and thereby fit them more easily for uniform and peaceable government. . . . Young men who have trodden the paths of science together, or have joined in the same sports, whether of swimming, scating (sic), fishing, or hunting, generally feel, thro' life, such ties to each other, as add greatly to the obligations of mutual benevolence." ("On the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic" [1786], in Benjamin Rush, *Essays, Literary, Moral, and Philosophical*. Philadelphia: 1806.) Also, members of the Working-men's Party, who pressed for a system of public education: "The main pillar of our system is general education; for it is an axiom no longer controverted, that the stability of a republic depends mainly

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upon the intelligence of its citizens—that in proportion as they become wise they become virtuous and happy—that the period for forming a good and useful citizen is in youth, ere ignorance and crime have deluded the mind by a lengthened dominion over it, and therefore that an early and suitable education for each child is of primary importance in maintaining the public weal. . . . [We desire] the establishment of institutions where the children of the poor and the rich may meet at that period of life, when the pomp and circumstance of wealth have not engendered pride; when the only distinction known will be the celebrity each may acquire by their acts of good fellowship; when the best opportunity is afforded for forming associations that will endure through life, and where the obloquy attending the present system will not attach. (Workingmen's Party, 1838) In addition, there are a number of individuals who expressed great interest in the educational system of the nation and who developed plans for such a system. Several of these are described in Allen Oscar Hansen, *Liberalism and American Education in the Eighteenth Century*. (New York: Octagon Books, 1965. Originally published by Macmillan, 1926.)

[6]See Edward A. Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), especially chapter 8, for a description of the changes in high-school programs; and chapter 9, for changes that related high-school program to opportunities in the work force.

[7]Ibid., chapter 8.

[8]Ibid., for a detailed historical description of these changes.

[9]There have been several changes in the meaning of "equal opportunity" in education throughout our history. "The original concept of equality of educational opportunity was based primarily upon the proposal that no one of superior intelligence should be denied the opportunity to continue through elementary and secondary schools, through the college and the university. We had a one-track school system. . . . We no longer believe that a single-track school system provides equality of educational opportunity. In our more progressive school systems, the traditional elementary school and senior high schools have been replaced by schools which seek to provide unique opportunities for boys and girls who vary greatly in their ability to acquire skill or knowledge. . . . we have provided schools in which individual instruction is given, others in which groups are organized with respect to their general intelligence or special abilities, classes for those who are backward, delinquent, physically handicapped, and the like. . . . For the high school, which was available for only the top ten percent in intelligence, we have provided the comprehensive high school with multiple curriculums, enrolling more than fifty percent of all boys and girls of high-school age. (Proceedings of the 68th Annual Meeting of the National Education Association, 1930) This change in the meaning of equal educational opportunity is noted by other authors. Martin Trow notes that prior to the development of mass comprehensive high schools, equal opportunity meant "the right of all who might profit from secondary education as so defined to enjoy its benefits." Geographical location and financial condition were the obstacles to be overcome in achieving this goal. However, as the first third of the twentieth century ended and enrollments swelled, and the impact of Dewey's ideas emphasizing the central role of the child in the educational process took hold, the definition changed. Cremin notes that equal opportunity came to mean "simply the right of all who came to be offered something of value, and it was the school's obligation to offer it." (In Martin Trow, "The Second Transformation of American Secondary Education," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 2 [1961]:144-65.) This shift in meaning has profound implications for the secondary schools, which now must offer programs matched to the needs of an expanding and therefore increasingly heterogeneous school population. The schools' success is now judged by a new set of criteria rather than by the provision of one particular curriculum.

[10]For the text of Walter Lippmann's comments, see N. Block and G. Dworkin, *The I.Q. Controversy* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1976). Also, see George S. Counts, *School and Society in Chicago* (New York: 1928) and "The Senior High School Curriculum," *School Review and Elementary School Journal, Supplementay Educational Monographs*, no. 29, 1926.

[11]These numbers and the statistics on college attendance were taken from W. Vance Grant and Leo J. Eiden, *Digest of Educational Statistics, 1980*. (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics, 1980).

[12]These efforts occurred in the context of educators' growing consternation over the increasing popularity of elementary education. As universal attendance approached realization late in the nineteenth century the schools were deluged with elementary students from working-class and immigrant homes. Educators tried dozens of ways to organize elementary schools to deal with this new variety of students. Many schemes, some quite ingenious, were devised in the 1880s and 1890s and tried for a time. But within a few decades, ability groupings on the basis of scientific tests seized the imagination of educators and carried the day.

[13]There is a persistent tendency among working-class and minority families to reject child-centered reforms, doubtless because children from such families are more likely to have only elementary education. In the American context, this reality encourages their families to place a premium on an education that promises to prepare them for work.

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[14]Arthur Eugene Bestor, *Educational Wastelands; The Retreat from Learning in Our Public Schools* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953); also, Mortimer Smith, *And Madly Teach* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1949).

[15]James B. Conant, *The American High School Today* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1967).

[16]John Gardener, *Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

[17]James S. Coleman et al., *Youth: Transition to Adulthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

[18]Frank Armbruster, *Our Children's Crippled Future: How American Education Has Failed* (New York: New York Times Book Co., 1977).

[19]Coleman subsequently agreed with some critics that the evidence did not support these conclusions.

[20]Grant and Eiden, *Digest of Educational Statistics, 1980.*

[21]Some of the categories into which special education children have been sorted have changed over the years, making precise comparisons difficult. However, the absolute increases in the numbers and proportion of these children attending school have been astonishing. In 1922, for example, the U.S. Census lists 23,000 "exceptional" children in the schools; this was 0.1 percent of the total school population. By 1932 the Census reported the presence of 164,000 exceptional children having a wide variety of handicaps in all twelve grades—0.57 percent of all school children. By 1980 nearly 10 percent of children between the ages of three and twenty-one were enrolled in special education classes.

[22]Indeed, so extensive has the high schools' coverage become that reformers are now trying to call attention to smaller and more marginal segments of the population: children of migrant workers; students who are married, or pregnant, though unmarried; students who have been suspended or expelled; students in jails with no high-school facilities; and inhabitants of remote rural areas where there are no high schools.

[23]This discussion of life adjustment education draws heavily on chapter 13 of Richard Hofstadter's *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).

[24]The discussion of historical changes in the meaning of literacy relies heavily on three sources: Daniel P. Resnick and Lauren B. Resnick, "The Nature of Literacy: An Historical Exploration," *Harvard Educational Review* 47 (3) (1977); Eugene Radwin, "Literacy—What and Why," qualifying paper submitted to the Harvard Graduate School of Education, November 1978; and a conversation with Jeanne Chall, professor of education, Harvard University.

[25]Resnick and Resnick in "The Nature of Literacy" make an important point in this regard. They write: "Unless we intend to relinquish the criterion of comprehension as the goal of reading instruction, there is little to go *back* to in terms of pedagogical method, curriculum, or school organization. The old tried-and-true approaches . . . were designed neither to achieve the literacy standard sought today nor to assure successful literacy for everyone. . . . early dropping out and selective promotion were in fact used to escape problems that must now be addressed through a pedagogy adequate to today's aspirations (p. 385)."

[26]Some analysts of the factors that have influenced the recent decline in test scores point to the relationship between the difficulty of the texts and the test scores. They argue that over the last thirty years the challenge of the texts, particularly, but not only, at the elementary level, plummeted, and that this helps to explain lower test scores, especially among the top students. Jeanne Chall made this point in testimony before the Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate, 96th Congress, 1979. In addition, in *An Analysis of Textbooks in Relation to Declining SAT Scores,* June 1977, Chall writes: "In general, the sixth grade history textbooks in use during the declining score years seemed almost to change their purpose. From books that were meant to be read, they seem to have become encyclopedic magazines intended to be used for browsing or for reference. . . . The findings for the eleventh grade textbooks are quite similar to those for grade 6." For a different point of view, see testimony by Roger Farr, vice-president, International Reading Association, before the same subcommittee.

[27]See Ivar Berg, " 'They Won't Work': The End of the Protestant Ethic and All That," in *Work and the Quality of Life,* James O'Toole (ed.) (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974).

[28]Eleanor Farrar, John E. DeSanctis, Peter Cowden, "The Walls Within: Work, Experience, and School Reform," final report to the National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C., July 1980.

[29]See Christopher Jencks et al., *Inequality* (New York: Basic Books, 1972); also James E. Rosenbaum, *Making Inequality: The Hidden Curriculum of High School Tracking* (New York: Wiley/Interscience, 1976).

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Who Will Teach in High School?

FOUR AND FIVE DECADES AGO those who sought teaching positions in America's secondary schools included significant numbers of academically able people. Although it is true that teaching was one of the few fields open to many of them—even in the 1950s and 1960s, as jobs outside teaching became more plentiful—school districts that wanted them could find ample numbers of high-quality applicants. Things are different now. Today's college freshman is less likely to aim toward a career in teaching than his counterpart at any time during the last thirty years. Furthermore, the intellectual ability of those who intend to teach, as measured by standardized tests, is markedly lower than that of college majors in every other field except ethnic studies. Though the gap in average test scores between prospective teachers and other students has not widened in the last decade, the proportion of particularly able people headed for teaching has declined. To add to this depressing picture, among those now teaching, more than 40 percent report that were they now college freshmen, they would not choose this occupation. What has happened?[1]

There are several reasons for these dramatic shifts, not all connected directly with conditions in high schools. Certainly, the women's movement is one. Not many decades ago most educated women, severely limited in their employment opportunities, gravitated toward teaching, librarianship, social work, nursing, and a few other occupations. The quality of these women was often high. Until the late 1960s, programs that led to bachelor's degrees and teacher certification at many of the large land-grant and state universities of the Midwest attracted some of the brightest women on campus. Not only did they compare favorably with women in liberal arts colleges (and the few in engineering), but their numbers were large as well; in 1969 about one quarter of the twenty thousand undergraduates at the University of Illinois, for example, were in programs that led to a teaching credential, and four fifths of these were preparing to teach in secondary schools. Most were women, and they were notably more able than the men in the same programs.

This situation no longer prevails. Women still choose teaching in large numbers, but career opportunities have broadened for them, and they now seek employment in many fields. The career aspirations of intellectually oriented women today do not seem significantly different from those of intellectually oriented men. Inasmuch as almost half of America's secondary school teachers are female, the effect on quality of new high-school teachers is noticeable.

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The issue of career aspirations for women is intertwined with their greater educational attainment. It is only relatively recently that a bachelor's degree became a requirement for elementary and seconday school teaching. As late as 1961, 15 percent of those teaching did not possess such a qualification. By 1976 the number had fallen to less than one percent. In the same period the percentage of teachers holding a master's degree rose from 23 percent to 37 percent. Historically, women have averaged fewer years of education than men, a gap that still holds, but one that is closing. At a time when a college degree was not necessary for teaching, it was, therefore, an easier field for many women to move into. Now that the formal qualification for a teaching credential, in terms of the number of years of college-level preparation, is coming to approximate the requirement for other, more lucrative occupations, those who make the investment in additional education have greater choice.

Unexpectedly, and indirectly, the phenomenal expansion of American higher education in recent decades has also taken its toll on the quality of secondary school teachers. Between 1950 and 1975 the numbers of college-age youth increased sharply, as did their rates of college attendance. By 1977 total enrollments in community colleges, four-year colleges, and research-oriented universities had grown to about 11.5 million students. Between 1960 and 1969 more than twice as many institutions of higher education were established than in any other ten-year period in American history: 700 new institutions, 80 percent of which were public, and about 70 percent of those two-year colleges—all needing teachers.

Community colleges had two primary sources of instructors: those graduating from universities with advanced degrees and seeking employment in higher education; and high-school teachers. For the former, competition was keen, since four-year colleges and universities also were expanding in the 1960s; generally speaking, if someone aspired to a teaching position in an institution of higher education, the community colleges represented the less desirable choice. But high-school teachers often saw teaching in a community college as an advancement, and indeed, many community colleges were successful in recruiting some of the most able secondary school teachers, both those already employed in high schools and those newly completing their programs of preparation.

Many other factors have tended to depress the quality of high-school teaching. Beginning teachers now receive an average annual salary about 80 percent that of their nonteaching contemporaries with bachelor's degrees, and their starting salaries are lower than those for any other college graduates except social workers. Teachers as a group are paid less on the average than service workers, farm workers, engineering technicians, sales workers, and nurses. Furthermore, jobs are scarce and uncertain. In many high schools all teachers with fewer than ten years of employment within the system have been dismissed as a result of the decline in the number of high-school youngsters. In 1977, when the drop in high-school enrollment began, about 15.7 million children were in grades nine through twelve. That figure is expected to fall to about 13.2 million by 1986. (Enrollments in grades kindergarten through eight will start increasing in 1984.) While these national figures mask considerable local and regional variation, jobs do not appear either plentiful or secure to a college student contemplating a teaching career.

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The financial condition of the public schools compounds the demographic influences. Somewhat apart from enrollments, schools are under pressure because of the condition of the economy and the popularity of tax-limitation initiatives. Funding is jeopardized both from local taxes and from the state treasury. Every spring school districts send layoff notices to thousands of teachers because of uncertain budget prospects for the following year. In many cases the teachers are "rehired" during the summer when budget problems are at least temporarily resolved, but the lack of security is widely publicized, and the attractiveness of the profession is further diminished. During New York City's financial crisis in the mid-1970s, thousands of teachers actually were dismissed. When the problems were resolved, and the teachers offered their jobs again, about one quarter chose not to return. They had found employment as bank tellers, insurance agents, and sales people, and preferred to remain in their new jobs.

There may be a tendency to overestimate the importance of job security in the occupational choices of college-educated young people today. For those touched personally by the depression in the thirties, job security was often the paramount goal. For people who grew up in the fifties and sixties, during a period of economic expansion and broadening opportunity for many, job security may have been displaced in importance by intellectual stimulation, glamour, and opportunity for advancement. Often it is the most self-confident person who chooses the less certain path. If there is an association between venturesomeness and ability, there may have been a tendency during the 1970s for the less able to choose or to remain in the classroom.

The issue of opportunity for advancement deserves emphasis. A career in teaching usually means very little change in the nature of one's basic responsibilities during the course of a working lifetime. The thirtieth year in the fifth grade or the history classroom is in most respects not very different from the first year. The limited opportunity for advancement must be a discouraging factor for ambitious young people, and the effect on teaching is all the more evident if security is no longer as important or as assured. The American expectation regarding a career is to advance in orderly progression to positions of ever-greater responsibility, prestige, and earnings. From time to time there is discussion of introducing more of a hierarchy within schools, wherein some teachers carry more responsibility and are paid more, but movement in that direction has not been rapid.

There are other barriers, more or less outside the schools proper, to recruiting people of ability. College professors, for example, seldom encourage their brightest students to choose a career in high-school teaching. Students with intellectual interests tend to admire and occasionally emulate their professors. University professors, however, are notorious for their disdain of schoolteachers. The reasons for this attitude require an analysis that is beyond the scope of this paper, but the phenomenon is almost universal. Many a student upon informing a respected professor of the intention to teach in high school is made to feel that the status of a schoolteacher in the eyes of the professor is low indeed; if the professor judges the student strong enough for graduate work, the young man or woman is dissuaded from teaching.

It has not always been thus. Up until about 1940 a significant proportion of college faculty had high-school teaching experience. But the college teacher felt

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he had moved to a loftier occupation, and that it was important to affirm his status. Thus he was a critic of the secondary school, although often a sympathetic one. He also knew the schools, and his criticisms frequently were rooted in intimate knowledge. He tended to view himself in many ways as a senior colleague to the high-school teacher. Besides, secondary schools before 1940 were much more like college prep schools than they are today, and there was a clear element of self-interest in the concern of the college professor. Periodically, even university presidents, like Eliot of Harvard, focused on issues in secondary education, and urged their own institutions to do so, too.

After World War II—if the community colleges are excluded—it became more common to move directly from being a student in college to teaching in one, without the intermediate step of teaching in high school. This, plus the broadened base of the high-school student population, increased the distance between professors and high-school teachers. There was a flurry of post-*Sputnik* curriculum activities on the part of academics when our defense position was believed to be threatened, and the quality of precollege science education was seen as faulty and contributory, but the impact of this event faded quickly.

In the last year or two there have been signs that professors are beginning to realize that their attitudes toward secondary school teaching may be contributing to academic problems in universities, even in highly selective ones. If fewer able people teach in high school, colleges have a rougher time with their freshmen. The 1980 report of the Commission on the Humanities identified the improvement of elementary and secondary education as the *prime* method of enhancing the quality of the humanities. The National Academy of Sciences seems to be making a connection between precollege education and the quality of America's science. There are other stirrings. Still, the prejudice of today's professors is deep. It will take a major sense of crisis for academics to begin to take secondary education seriously—critically, but also constructively—and then to start encouraging some of their better students to consider teaching as a career, and perhaps themselves addressing some of the tough curriculum and teacher education problems.

At least one more development outside the schools must be mentioned. There has been a significant loss of optimism about America's ability to alter individual opportunity through social programs. Young people who want to improve the general welfare often are told that schools do not make much of a difference. When the Great Society programs were launched in the 1960s, especially the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the link between improving education of the poor and advancing their economic position seemed obvious. The connection between desegregation and improvement of education achievement of blacks was similarly unquestioned. Massive effort and considerable money were devoted to improvement of education of the poor and of blacks. Title I of the new act and judicial decrees to eliminate racial isolation seemed to offer hope of a dramatic change in the social condition of an American underclass.

It was not long before the sense of hope began to erode. By 1969, and then into the 1970s, there were well-publicized second thoughts about these programs and their effectiveness, coming both from the new administration in Washington and from social scientists themselves. Racial integration did not

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seem to make much difference; sheer luck, the public was told, was probably an overriding factor in social mobility. Social problems were pictured as so complex that even apparently well-informed manipulation was powerless to change them. By the mid to late seventies, a strong moral tone began to be injected into the debates about social policy, and the Great Society by 1980 began to be seen as an example of meddlesome social "engineering."

Colleges have always had a large complement of idealistic young people committed to fostering social justice and individual improvement through community service. Such motivation has led many a gifted person over the decades to the high-school classroom. But it has become common now in many quarters to adopt a kind of fatalism about the enhancement of human potential, to express the belief that economic, political, demographic, and other social factors overwhelm the effects of schooling or other forms of personal intervention. There is thus reduced opportunity for an individual teacher to have much effect. Catching the mood, and partly as a result, young people often seem more self-centered in making a career choice than in a previous era.

Indeed, several occupations that are as much "calling" as "profession" have suffered a decline in quality. This phenomenon may in part be a result of the ideology advanced by many leaders of the women's movement. In an earlier era women were assumed to be predisposed to social services, to occupations in which they provided direct assistance to needy people on an individual basis. For many reasons—some already mentioned, another, that this "predisposition" has been used to justify policies such as low pay and lack of promotional opportunities—this point of view is passionately rejected by many men and women today. A consequence is that young women tend to make occupational choices based on the same values that have influenced young men: competition, power, status, and wealth. The effect on the quality of people drawn to the service-oriented professions, at least in the short term, seems devastating.

Many beliefs about the capability of the education system alone to affect a person's life chances are true enough. When discussing schools, one must indeed recognize the potent effects on them and on those they serve of shifting community values, conflicting political pressures, certain demographic changes, the economic vigor of the nation, the nature of personal ambition, and the change in quality of intellectual life, among many other elements. The health of the schools, particularly the public schools, depends on the condition of the nation. This relationship, of course, holds everywhere, but particularly in the United States with its common school traditions that extend back for more than a hundred years and that intimately tie school to community. In general, if people feel good about themselves and optimistic about the country, they are satisfied with the public schools. If there are doubts about the country, people look critically at the institutions that represent and are expected to strengthen the common heritage. Schools both sustain and reflect their communities. Therefore, the explanations for changes in the nature of the secondary school teaching force are as complex as explanations of America's loss of optimism, prestige, and sense of nationhood. Young people sense these relationships. Awareness of them contributes to a decline in the attractiveness of teaching as an occupation. When the prevalent pessimism about our national ability to modify peoples' personal circumstances lifts, or when we rediscover

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our sense of national unity, there probably will be a change in the attractiveness of teaching in the public schools for people of ability.

Yet one must be cautious about the possibility of presenting a misleading picture of actual schools and classrooms today, for in many classrooms the picture is far from completely gloomy. In school after school one finds remarkably skillful and dedicated teachers who care about the children, who know their subject, and who keep trying, often heroically and in the face of stiff odds. Strong and effective teachers are found in abundance not only in middle class and wealthy communities, but in some of America's most difficult schools as well, in decrepit neighborhoods where many readers of this essay would fear to walk. This is one of the paradoxes of American schools. When one speaks about averages or general conditions, there is plenty to worry about. Certainly the trends are cause for alarm. But if my observations are indicative, there must be scores of thousands among the million or so high-school teachers today who more than equal the best of an earlier time. These dedicated, knowledgeable, effective teachers are backed by hundreds of thousands of local school board members who devote long hours at no pay to sustaining and enhancing the quality of public schools. Their work is often an inspiration to those who become familiar with it. These groups are central in thinking about ways of mitigating some of the growing problems. There is more of the picture to fill out when considering the characteristics of teachers today, however, and some of it, unfortunately, adds to a sense of developing crisis.

An occupation's attractiveness depends in part on the quality of the program of professional preparation. On the teacher education front, there is little to find encouraging. I have already mentioned the difficulty of attracting able people to undergraduate programs of teacher preparation, and that alone is a deterrent for people with academic interests; most people seek others with similar ability and motivation. But there are serious problems with the programs themselves. Prospective teachers study in any of about twelve hundred institutions of higher education, ranging in size from America's largest to the very smallest, from the very best to the most marginal. A typical program of seconday school teacher preparation consists of about one quarter to one third of the work toward the bachelor's degree in the academic major—that is, in the subject that the future teacher is to teach in high school. From one fifth to one quarter of the total work is in education courses, with about one half of that portion being student teaching and classroom observation. The remainder usually consists of the university's general education requirements, plus electives. The common pattern is for a prospective secondary school teacher to major in the field that he or she intends to teach, and to minor in education.

In each of these broad areas the quality of work varies enormously among institutions. Regarding the education component, work in elementary or secondary school classrooms at even the strongest universities often consists of little more than exposure and brute experience. Usually, neither the cooperating classroom teacher (the regular employee of the school district) nor the university supervisor possesses a well-considered conceptual framework in which to analyze classroom events adequately. The prospective teacher typically has a smattering of education psychology, a bit of education history, and sometimes a course in education philosophy. This work, however, seldom

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provides a sufficient basis for reflection about, and analysis of, conditions in schools. The university supervisor is usually a person who has had successful teaching experience, but often that person has been away from the classroom for many years—increasingly true these days, because education departments are shrinking and few new instructors are being hired. Thus there sometimes is meager intellectual stimulation associated with the large segment of teacher preparation activity based in the classroom, though the other challenges associated with working in schools are real enough and must be met.

A similar statement often can be made about work on campus. The courses on methods of teaching the various subjects sometimes consist of little more than helpful hints about effective classroom procedure, with a minimum of intellectual substance or theoretical underpinning associated with the course offering. There are dozens of exceptions to these statements, as one might imagine in a system as large as America's teacher education enterprise—a few programs are rigorous and intellectually demanding—yet relatively few students are stimulated by ideas in their preparatory work for teaching, though they often hasten to say that they value the practical work and, in fact, consistently demand more of it. New entrants to any profession are preoccupied with acquiring the skills needed to succeed during the first weeks on the job. In their concern with future survival they often tend to be impatient with "theory," and exert enormous pressure to emphasize the practical. The intellectual basis for the part of the teacher preparation program dealing with history and philosophy of education is more readily defined, but it is precisely these courses that often are viewed by future teachers as irrelevant—a phenomenon that is becoming increasingly true with the decline in quality of those entering teacher education programs. It is doubtful if as many as two dozen of the twelve hundred institutions that prepare teachers are maintaining programs that a bright youngster would find demanding.

It would be an error to single out teacher education programs for special criticism in such matters. As increasing numbers of young people go to college, the proportion who find significant stimulation in academic and intellectual pursuits can be expected to fall. Despite statements to the contrary, it is doubtful that teacher education programs differ sharply from other programs at the same university. Unlike law or medicine, teacher education units seldom exercise great autonomy on a given campus. Programs that lead to a teaching credential might be a little worse or a little better than the others, but the differences in quality of teacher education programs from one institution to another are greater than the differences in quality among different programs at the same university.

There is, however, a crucial distinguishing feature of teacher preparation programs: they lead to a license as well as a degree. The license is awarded by the state education agency and thus is subject directly to political influences. In recent years organized teacher groups have sought and obtained greater influence over the teacher certification process. Twenty years ago the state-level body that had the major responsibility for certifying teachers consisted primarily of professors of education and school administrators. Now the majority membership on many of the boards consists of teachers designated by their unions, a change brought about by political pressure from the rapidly

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organizing teaching profession during the 1960s and 1970s. The National Education Association, in particular, placed the "governance" issue near the top of its list of priorities. The strategy—largely successful—was to use the state-based National Education Association affiliates to exert pressure within the various state legislatures to change the law governing membership of the teacher certification board—in effect, putting teachers designated by the unions in the majority.

The new influence has been used to place more responsibility for the preparation of teachers in the hands of those now teaching, by requiring a higher percentage of the program of preparation to be in classrooms, under the supervision of those currently teaching. Teacher education has moved discernibly toward an apprenticeship model, where preparation has come more to center on the practical predicaments faced by teachers. This development has amplified the preference of those enrolled in teacher preparation programs to emphasize highly practical approaches to the job.

Teacher education programs that have a strong classroom-based component need not lack mental stimulation, of course. Classroom problems can (and often should) command intricate skills and sophisticated knowledge. To figure out what lies beyond a child's incorrect response, then help that child build on or correct his or her existing concept, is an artful and complex task. However, there usually is little evidence of much reflection about such matters in settings where prospective teachers are placed. Rather, the focus tends to be on coping with the extraordinary demands of managing thirty or so youngsters, with keeping order while conveying a bit of information as the main goal. These skills are not easy to acquire, but in many places they seem to be developed at the expense of thoughtful examination of the intellectual foundations of teaching.

At the same time that teacher education programs are drifting toward the classroom, universities, particularly those with a strong research commitment, are reexamining all their programs as they attempt to meet new financial constraints. In such a climate, traditional university values associated with research and theory development are reaffirmed. But a school of education is beginning to run a double risk—that of losing its authority to prepare people for a teaching credential unless it honors the values being established by unions and many students for more practical work, and that of losing its place at the university unless it emphasizes reflective and publishable scholarship. All the professions are subject to such contradictory pressures, but in those of low prestige, the resulting problem is reaching a critical stage. Universities find it easier to accommodate to the demands of lawyers and physicians for a greater clinical orientation in professional preparation than they do for social workers, librarians, and teachers.

At the same time it must said that teaching is not an occupation with a firm and agreed-upon large knowledge base from which the practitioner can draw to address problems that arise in a classroom. Neither is there a well-developed technology associated with high-school teaching nor an accompanying set of replicable skills that teachers transmit one to the other or that they learn during their program of preparation. At least, there is not as much of such knowledge as is sometimes assumed to exist or that those who educate teachers often imply.

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Surely, a great deal about the art of teaching *is* known, and there is much to be learned by prospective teachers. Certainly, the quest for such knowledge deserves high priority, and research toward its identification must be strengthened in schools of education and elsewhere. Yet today's successful teachers, including many of those who seem to derive greatest satisfaction from their jobs, have highly personal—even idiosyncratic—classroom styles. They can and do talk about their approaches to teaching, but with no real expectation that other teachers would necessarily try to adopt their techniques or that they themselves would adopt teaching styles devised by others. Teachers—as a group but with the usual exceptions—have seldom sought major satisfaction from contributing to general knowledge in the field. Rather, those people who chose teaching as a career, at least in the past, derived greatest pleasure from serving individual children. The prime audience for the teacher was the child (and, indirectly, the parent) rather than other teachers. Teaching until recently has been a comparatively private act, and many teachers liked it that way.

Some observers who have studied classroom teachers have lamented the fact that they do not seem to be "professional" in the sense that they read journals and books about effective practice or seem eager to share new ideas with other teachers. Teacher talk, at least when it focuses on classroom events, has more the character of reporting, and by describing, validating or at least affirming. In an indirect and unintended way, then, attempts to emphasize the technological side of teaching, as has been the case in many teacher education programs during the 1970s, may have contributed to a reduction in teacher satisfaction, at least among those teachers who entered the profession with a different set of personal hopes and expectations.

Teaching itself has been pushed in the direction of becoming less an activity in which an informed practitioner exercises professional discretion based on a repertoire of possible actions, and more one that emphasizes routine and direction by rule. Government—both legislatures and courts—has in recent years increasingly prescribed the details of professional behavior. The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, for example, requires that each handicapped child be educated in the "least restrictive environment," and that an "individualized education plan" be negotiated for each youngster by the parent and the teacher. Teaching has become more routinized also because the competencies to be emphasized—the curriculum—not only are prescribed to an increased degree by state legislatures, but the methods of achieving them are determined by specific instructional requirements. "Competency-based teacher education" has enjoyed considerable popularity in recent years. Such programs consist of discrete lessons formulated in advance to achieve specific outcomes that seem to be associated with student achievement. Many of today's classrooms, as a result, afford less discretion for the teacher than was once the case. As professional practice becomes increasingly prescriptive, there seems to be less demand for sensitive judgment on the part of the teacher about dealing with the needs of individual children.

When trying to improve professional practice, one confronts the perennial question: Should high reliance be placed on the ability of the person actually providing the service to accommodate to requirements that arise in each situation, or should the desired behavior be prescribed by someone—from

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Washington, the state capital, or the superintendent's office—presumably more knowledgeable or powerful? With the new governmentally induced emphasis on results, on specific "outcomes," teaching has become more atomized. Such an element has always been present in teaching, but most good teachers usually found ways of pursuing interesting tangents and teaching important, but unanticipated, lessons. The more systematized approaches to professional practice—developed in an attempt to control teacher behavior and based presumably on "scientific" findings—may be repelling people who prefer to see teaching as a profession in the traditional sense. If, as a result of external prescription, what remains for the teacher is relatively routine and capable of mastery by virtually anyone, people who seek a different level of challenge will look to other occupations.

One of the most powerful influences on teachers in recent decades has been the movement toward unionization. About 75 percent of elementary and secondary school teachers today belong either to the American Federation of Teachers, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, or to the National Education Association. Both groups represent teachers as employees and bargain collectively with "management" for their members (though perhaps as many as 20 percent of NEA members are not currently covered by a collective bargaining agreement). Regularly, in most large school districts, and many small ones, there is negotiation of a new contract that stipulates not only the salary to be received but, to an increasing degree, other terms of employment and conditions of work as well. Thus class size is written into many collective bargaining agreements. Here and there the bargaining unit attempts to specify the role the teacher is to have in designing the curriculum or choosing the textbook. Contracts often run to dozens of pages, with the details of expected behavior and procedure elaborately specified.

Unionization of teachers seems to have supplanted the attempt after World War II to establish teaching as a profession. In the 1940s and 1950s the model presented to those entering the field was that of the physician or lawyer, an independent practitioner operating from a specialized knowledge base, making sophisticated decisions about how best to serve an individual client—and exercising considerable autonomy in the process. It was hoped that the use of this model, accompanied by a lengthening of the program of teacher preparation and the increased importance attached to education after World War II, would contribute to enhancement of income and prestige.

It is arguable how effective the approach was or even could have been. In a largely female occupation drawn from lower-class and lower-middle-class groups, with the primary employer a unit in the public sector, professionalism in any broadly accepted sense may have been a vain and largely symbolic quest. With the advent of unionization, even the symbolism seems empty, though it is reaffirmed from time to time by union leaders, even if without conviction. Teachers often call themselves "professionals," but the labeling does not seem a reflection of actual practice. It became clear during the 1970s that no matter how teachers view themselves, the general public continues to place them in a very different category from physicians and attorneys. Whatever else unionization has done for teachers, it has engendered a popular perception of them as people who work to rule on the basis of agreements embedded in written

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contracts, and as workers who regularly exercise their right to strike to obtain concessions that more clearly benefit themselves than the students. The public still compares the teacher favorably with the banker, congressman, and lawyer, yet fewer people every year seem to want their children to become one.

There is a difficult-to-avoid question that must be raised in view of the ability of people attracted to teacher education programs today, the nature of the program of preparation, and the changing dimensions of the job: Should teacher education remain a university-based activity? There is evidence that universities have become somewhat casual in their admission policies because of the pressures to enroll students. Most public universities and many private ones allocate funds to the various departments depending on enrollments. The pressure to admit anyone who has the minimum qualifications is more than some education faculties can resist. If minimum becomes the norm, if the intellectual aspects of teacher education are deemphasized, should there be attempts to place responsibility for teacher preparation outside universities, in the community colleges, for example?

Although such a development is unlikely, it is nevertheless necessary to highlight the issue. The nature of teacher preparation and the quality of the entrant to the field seem among the most crucial of the problems facing secondary schools today. Before the end of the decade high schools again will be hiring large numbers of teachers. Many of the teachers hired during the period of rapid expansion in the 1950s and the 1960s will begin to retire in the mid-1980s. School administrators already are expressing concern about finding suitable replacements. It would seem that, in this current period of relatively few openings for secondary school teachers, the nature of the teacher education program should itself receive intensive examination, but this is not happening. Rather, schools of education are struggling to survive, worrying about the next budget allocation and enrolling as many students as possible with one eye closed to qualifications. There is the somewhat chilling possibility that the schools today may be staffed as well as they will be for the next decade. Although there is an extraordinary range of ability among the teachers in America's twenty-four thousand high schools, it is quite possible now to find superb schools. Conceivably that task will become much harder in the years to come.

Much of the focus in this essay has been on the discouraging trends regarding the choice of teaching as an occupation by able young people, particularly those who are intellectually inclined. Whatever else schools do or do not accomplish, they are society's major vehicle for conveying knowledge. Unless schools are replaced, and if the job is to be done well, academically able people must choose classroom careers. To position ourselves for the day when there is again recognition of the importance of a strong education system for the country's future, and the political will to strengthen the education system, it seems important to maintain programs of teacher preparation in those colleges and universities traditionally associated with strong intellectual accomplishment. If teacher education is allowed to devolve to other institutions, it is unlikely that the academic foundation of American schooling could be easily improved when the country decides it should be. It is a fact that the overwhelming majority of young people choose their colleges first and their occupations second. For good or ill, those with strongest academic interests

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tend to gravitate toward certain universities, and then choose their future occupation from among those that are offered there. If the colleges that have the primary responsibility for advancing scholarship relinquish their roles in teacher education, the young people who attend those universities simply will not have the option of a teaching career.

In some respects, changes in the nature of high-school students are even more dramatic than for teachers, and a few of these should be mentioned if we are to understand the appeal—or lack of it—for a career in the classroom. By the late 1970s a higher percentage of youngsters were completing high school than ever before in America or anywhere else. Putting the issue in the reverse, there were fewer dropouts. In 1940 about 40 percent of whites thirty-five to thirty-nine years of age had completed four years of high school; among nonwhites, about 12 percent. By 1978 the figure for whites had risen to about 85 percent; for nonwhites, about 78 percent. About 75 percent of all youngsters receive diplomas now.

A major feature of high-school life today, then, is that a much higher percentage of youngsters of secondary school age attend these institutions. The student body is less homogeneous. One can assume that even in a hypothetical, unchanging world such a dramatic shift in the composition of an institution signals profound changes in the purposes to be served. In a period of flux the capacity of the institution to adjust is severely taxed because of the lack of clarity about the new aims, or if indeed they are expected to be new ones.

Only a generation ago teachers could assume that they and their students shared more or less similar values. If the students did not, at least most of them (and their parents) seemed outwardly to accept the wisdom about such matters of those who ran these institutions. Teachers and principals, in turn, had little doubt that their activity reflected the community will. But community expectations that became less clear with the need to serve a wide range of students, and the changing composition of the student body, caused the authority of the teacher as a representative of the community to weaken both in the eyes of the adult community and in the lives of the youngsters.

With the change in the mix of students during the last forty years, it has become harder for schools to focus on academic subjects and harder also for many children to comply with scholastic expectations. Furthermore, children are not unaware of the symptoms attendant on the loss of national purpose and the concomitant desire to question every American institution from the presidency to their Boy Scout group. The skepticism toward those in responsible positions and the erosion of civility within the community have been reflected faithfully among children. Not only are youngsters less inclined to accept figures formerly in positions of generally accepted authority, but they often directly challenge the basis of that authority as well. Combine these developments with the dramatic rise in actual violence within the schools, including crimes against teachers, and one sees a setting that cannot help but shock adults who were students in these very same institutions only a generation ago—and shock also those who are thinking about teaching as an occupation. Not all high schools are the same, of course. In fact, most observers probably would find few changes in those schools attended by more than half of today's secondary school youngsters, the schools in remote America, in the thousands of small towns and villages throughout the country. The change in

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schools in metropolitan areas, however—which also happen to be those closest to where newspapers are published and television studios located—has been profound indeed.

Does it all make a difference? Are teachers really necessary? Isn't it the case that a youngster who is interested in ideas will pursue those interests despite all obstacles? Perhaps so. For some young people in every generation, schools and teachers seem a distraction. But such youngsters are few. For most, a patterned introduction to the world's knowledge is essential. Even for the self-motivated, a systematic curriculum usually is necessary to develop literacy skills, a knowledge of the sciences, and an appreciation of the arts. While information is available from many sources, each person needs an intellectual framework on which to build images of a coherent and meaningful world. For the foreseeable future, and for most children, the school will be the place where this does or does not happen.

Beyond the announced curriculum, though, children learn a great deal of consequence in schools, not least from their teachers. Schools are the first institution outside the family that the child is exposed to extensively. Teachers are usually the first adult nonrelatives in positions of direct authority whom the child has prolonged opportunity to observe. To underscore the importance of this association, the school is a creature of the community; thus it represents the child's official introduction to the broader society and what it values.

It is in this last dimension that teachers also have a powerful influence. Are they personally fair? Are they courteous? Are they honest? Are they people of principle? What interests do they have? Are they stimulated by ideas? What do they reflect to the children about a society's values and priorities? For most people, the world outside the home represents a critical and sensitive set of opportunities and adaptations. The child first learns about this world in a most impressionable way from teachers, whom society has made authoritative purveyors of our country's heritage, aspirations, and values. If a teacher is unprincipled, the child learns that the society countenances unprincipled behavior. If a teacher is personally courteous to children, the youngster learns that civility is valued.

Therefore, *who* teaches is an issue of national importance. If those who choose to teach are not people of sensitivity and ability, this message to children will ripple through a lifetime of associations with the nation's formal institutions. Some children always will be educated well—in expensive private schools, if necessary. But to what degree will American public schools, the common schools, continue to be a place where *all* children receive an adequate education, and to what degree will that education be based on a significant intellectual foundation? In no small measure, the answer depends on who is persuaded to teach in these institutions and what kind of education they receive.

REFERENCE

[1]In 1979 the five most popular college curricular areas were: business and commerce, health and medical occupations, engineering, social sciences, and education. Interest in teaching has declined steadily since 1973. In 1979, 3 percent of college-bound men and 9.5 percent of college-bound women intended to teach. High-school seniors in 1979 who intended to teach averaged 392 on their SAT Verbal scores compared with a score of 505 for those choosing English, 498 for those choosing physical science, and 476 for those choosing library science.

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GORDON L. MCANDREW

The High-School Principal: Man in the Middle

THIRTY YEARS' WORK as a teacher, principal, and superintendent, and interviews with high-school principals in various parts of the country and from different kinds of schools, lead me to conclude that the principalship, once a position of considerable independence and authority, has been circumscribed over the past several years by a variety of forces and events. As a result, the high-school principal has become a man in the middle. Of these influences, more later.

"Show me a good principal, and I'll show you a good school" is part of education's conventional wisdom. If you assume that the ultimate criterion of a good school is how well children learn, is there reason to believe that the person in the principal's chair affects student achievement? Not much. I have not seen enough evidence to convince me that the right principal will guarantee the academic integrity of a high school.

If, however, we assume that a healthy climate—that is, a safe and orderly school with high morale and expectations—is the criterion of a good school, who the principal is appears to be very important. Describing an effective principal as one who "turned the school around" almost always refers to how well the school operates rather than how much students learn. Although the connection between climate and achievement is not automatic, a recent study in England, described in Michael Rutter's *Fifteen Thousand Hours*,[1] offers some evidence that they are related. Secondary schools, it was found, varied markedly in achievement and behavior, even after taking into account differences in student ability. The findings of this investigation—conducted in twelve secondary schools in London over a three-year period—disagree with those of James Coleman[2] and Christopher Jencks.[3] Rutter and his colleagues conclude that the climate of a school, what they describe as its ethos, does contribute significantly to academic achievement.

The conclusion that schools with a positive ethos can reduce inequality is not to be interpreted as a leveling of achievement. As one reviewer commented, "All the children do better, but the children from professional families still, on the average, do best." A good school academically is one with good students; the more there are, the better the school will be. In James March's description they are students who "do well on standardized tests, . . . plan to attend college, . . . attend school relatively willingly and with a minimum of disruptive bombast, . . . are interested in and pursue a variety of intellectual and quasi-

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intellectual interests, and . . . would almost certainly be and do all of these things regardless of the school district they attend."[4]

I believe a principal's influence on achievement is greater in elementary than in high school, probably because the emphasis in the early grades is on basic cognitive skills, which are specific, well-defined, and easily measured. Also, younger children are more malleable and easier to motivate than adolescents; study habits and attitudes are still being formed. Because high schools are bigger, the principal is less able to influence what happens. Behavior is a greater problem than in the lower grades, which makes more difficult establishing a climate conducive to learning.

Common sense tells us that scholastic achievement presupposes a reasonable degree of order. If we assume that learning is an important function of the high school, the principal's role in establishing a proper environment is critical. That the principal more than any other person sets the tone is sufficient enough reason to justify examining who he is, the nature of his work, how he got there, the satisfactions and frustrations of the job, and why 98 percent of the country's more than twenty-four thousand high schools are headed by males.

With collective bargaining came the growing concern over whether principals are "management or labor," something that would not have been a matter for discussion not too many years ago, when both administrators and teachers comprised the membership of the National Education Association. Now these same administrators are unwelcome in either the NEA or its chief rival, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Principals have become "middle management," an ambiguous status that is of concern to them and that has great implications for the management of public schools.

The issue is well illustrated by the following story: In 1970 when I was superintendent of the Gary, Indiana, schools, I was involved in a strike over wages mounted by the local chapter of the AFT. Schools were closed, and picket lines surrounded them. As part of management, principals were on duty. Among them was Bob Smith, head of Washington High. On a particularly cold morning two weeks into the strike I drove by Smith's school on my way to the office. A half dozen Washington High teachers, bundled up against the cold but with signs aloft, were on duty at the school's entrance. No surprise there. What caught my attention, however, was a "nonpicket," coffee in one hand, and doughnuts in the other, chatting with the strikers while offering much appreciated hot nourishment. Even through the extra clothing and face mask, it was painfully obvious that the good Samaritan was none other than the principal.

When I reached my office, I called him, wondering, as the phone rang, whether it would be answered or whether Washington's principal was still on the picket line giving aid and comfort to his striking teachers. Smith answered; what ensued was a lengthy, sometimes tense conversation between an angry superintendent and a somewhat defensive and clearly frustrated principal.

Smith had been a teacher at Washington for many years before becoming assistant principal. He became principal just two years before the strike. He knew his staff well, was respected by most, and was a personal friend of many. Certainly, he worked with them more closely and knew them better than he knew the superintendent, newly on the job from another city, or school board

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members, who appeared at his school only on ceremonial occasions. As a teacher he had been an active union member. His salary was tied to the teachers' pay schedule; thus, he would benefit economically if the union prevailed in its wage demands. He was wise enough, also, to know that strikes eventually end and that, as the leader of a large school, he would be responsible for reopening the doors, bringing the staff together again, and working to heal inevitable wounds.

One could argue over whether Smith did the right thing. Perhaps his motives were good and his judgment poor. My point in relating the incident is to illustrate how the principal's role has changed as the result of very rapid changes in our society over the past thirty years.

When I began teaching high school in Oakland, California, in 1949, there was no uncertainty about the principal's job—not in my mind and, most certainly, not in the thinking of Dr. Jones, who was the unquestioned leader of the school in all matters large and small. Jones was management; he selected us, and we were his teachers for as long as he wished. A strike would have been out of the question. After all, as we kept telling ourselves, teachers were professionals, not teamsters. Grievance procedures, negotiations, and collective bargaining were unknown to us. Very few among us belonged to the AFT, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, and at that time the most militant of the teacher organizations. Those who did were viewed by most as unprofessional, if not dangerously radical. The overwhelming majority of teachers and administrators belonged to the NEA, which then was, more than anything else, a company union. My local's major activities were sponsoring a luncheon for new teachers each fall and a scholarship tea in the spring.

Dr. Jones exerted his leadership from a distance. He certainly was not one of us, not even first among equals. No Bob Smith he. Jones was the lineal descendant, humanized by time and the flow of events, of Mr. Dutton, the principal described by David Tyack in *The One Best System*. The year is 1899:

> I became aware that a teacher was subservient to a higher authority. One day in came Mr. Dutton to take his seat on the platform next to her [the teacher] and to hear the recitations. Our principal was a stickler for proprieties, and the proper way to read in the public schools in the year 1899 was to say "page 35, chapter 4," and, holding the book in the right hand, with the toes pointing at an angle of 45 degrees, the head held straight and high, the eyes looking directly ahead, the pupil would lift up his voice and struggle in loud, unnatural tones.
>
> Miss Dogherty had properly trained the toes and arms, but she thought reciting chapter and page "a cold douche on the interest of a story." The principal was not amused by the children's prodigious ignorance of the proprieties. As he left, disconcerted, the children chorused. "Good afternoon, Mr. Dutton." As for me, recalled the teacher, "only centuries of the civilization process kept me safe. Had I followed my primitive instincts—but it is no matter." For the rest of the day, stretching to twilight, she coached the children on how to address the august principal, impersonating his mannerisms with an earnestness born of her own respect for the "benign but awful" power of the system.[5]

There were great differences between the school where I began as a teacher and those over which I have been superintendent the past twelve years. To comment on some of these might help describe the reality of being a high-school principal in the 1980s.

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High schools have become bigger, and there are fewer of them. The average enrollment is about eight hundred students, though city schools are substantially larger. The principals I interviewed for this essay supervised schools ranging in size from seven hundred fifty to twenty-six hundred. The number of high schools with two thousand or more students has about doubled in the last fifteen years.

The curriculum and structure of the school day have not changed much. There are more extensive offerings related to the greater holding power of high schools. The 40 percent drop-out rate in 1950 has been stable at around 25 percent since the mid-sixties.

Though the percentage of students remaining in school has increased, enrollment has declined about 10 percent in the past decade. Most of this decline is due to lower birth rates, but some represents an abandonment of public education. Since the early seventies the number of children attending private schools has actually increased one percent a year. In addition, there has been a significant movement of middle-class families, predominantly white, to suburbia. As a result, the urban public school population is relatively poorer and has more minority representation than ten years ago. Public schools, once the pride of our society, have clearly fallen on bad times.

About half of today's graduates go on to some form of postsecondary education, a figure that has remained relatively constant over the past several years. The most striking change in this group has been a significant increase in the number of students enrolling in two-year community colleges. Teachers' salaries have improved, though some of this gain has been lost in the recent inflation. Class sizes are smaller, and grades are higher, though achievement scores for seventeen-year-olds declined measurably in science, reading, and mathematics in the 1970s. And as the headlines keep telling us, SAT scores are going down.

It is more difficult today than it was thirty years ago to expel students or dismiss staff, illustrating, among other things, the increased role of the judiciary and unions in school affairs. The courts and collective bargaining play a role in the eighties never imagined by Dr. Jones or those of us who taught in his school.

Surprisingly, and in contrast to society at large, technology has had little impact. In 1966 I predicted that "by 1980 there will be a refinement of present crude attempts ranging from workbook-like programs to relatively sophisticated experiments in computer-assisted instruction."[6] In fact, classes today are taught in about the same way they have always been. As a young teacher I did not have access to such things as educational television, but in contrast to predictions by myself and others, the new technology is not used all that much, although libraries are now commonly referred to as media centers and librarians have become media specialists. Computer-assisted instruction has made little headway. Instruction has changed little; the teacher still talks and the students still listen. One could argue that the greatest impact of the electronic revolution in American high schools has been in sophisticated detection systems.

Such attention to security symbolizes the darkest side of the striking changes that have occurred in the area of "manners and morals." Lack of discipline, according to Gallup polls, is the number one problem in the public schools. A 1979 National Education Association survey reported that one in twenty teachers—a total of one hundred ten thousand—claimed they were physically

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attacked by students during 1978. A "Safe School Study" made by the National Institute of Education estimated that 70 percent of teachers are abused "either verbally or psychologically" by students on a regular basis.[7]

There have been fundamental alterations in post-World War II American society that have affected all our institutions. High schools have been particularly influenced by societal changes in family life, sexual mores, civil rights, and the role of women. Young people are freer to express themselves with fewer constraints on their behavior and more rights than ever before. As a result, high schools, for better or worse, are more permissive than they used to be. All of this converged during the turbulent sixties, when everything seemed up for grabs. David Tyack in *The One Best System* described it thus:

> By the end of the 1960's, however, established assumptions and practices were questioned. Many people questioned whether equality of input in schooling was enough to promote equality of opportunity (some doubted that schooling had much to do with equality at all). Outcast groups eager for power argued that keeping the schools out of politics was a smoke screen for elite, white rule. Critics of the establishment claimed that the professionals had neither the expertise nor the empathy to design schooling appropriate for all groups. Although scholarly books prior to 1965 had scarcely mentioned teachers, courts, ethnic groups or students as elements in the power equation in school governance, by the 1970's teacher unionization, collective bargaining, judicial decrees, students' rights and community control upset the politics of education. People on both sides of the educational spectrum began to propose basic alternative structures of schooling—vouchers, performance contracts, radical decentralization, free schools, alternative schools within the public system—and even the abolition of compulsory schooling or the deliberate deschooling of society.[8]

The ferment has subsided, but the quiet, although welcomed by schoolpeople, is ominous. Silence goes hand in hand with a widespread lack of interest among students. Many principals report significantly less enthusiasm not only for study but for extracurricular activities as well. As one veteran West Coast principal put it, "The activism of the Sixties was replaced by the complacency of the Seventies." Even high-school athletics have fallen on tough days. As has been noted, there has also been a turning away from public education, particularly among middle-class parents. Their concerns are, in my view, related to the "manners and morals" issue. In cities particularly, questions about discipline and academic standards are linked to matters of race and class, particularly the latter. One black colleague, a retired high-school principal and longtime resident of a city I know well, described the development of an upper-middle-class black community that has turned its back on public education for reasons that are as much social as academic. Among this group are public-school administrators. As my friends told me, "They might go public in the elementary grades, but never beyond that. Never have there been so many black Baptists getting a Catholic education." This abandonment confirms the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy. Albert Shanker, president of the United Federation of Teachers, in one of his "Where We Stand" pieces in *The New York Times* last year, put it very bluntly:

> Public schools are losing out to private schools. . . . What parents find better about most of these schools is not buildings, not curriculum, not teachers, not convenience. Nor is it rewards given to staff or its special accountability. What is it then?

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> It's the students. Parents choose to pay for private schools rather than send their children to free public schools for the same reason that thousands of teachers who once taught in public schools are now teaching at lower salaries in private schools. The learning atmosphere may be better. There are fewer disruptions. There is much less fear of violence. There is, in a word, discipline.[9]

In a recent *Time* article,[10] this loss of confidence was expressed from another perspective. Citing the growing middle-class demand for admission to private kindergartens, *Time* said, "Not only can such parents pay, they also share a belief that public schools, even in kindergarten, are unreliable. Parents go through the crunch, financial and emotional, in hopes of ensuring that their children will be able to make it at good elementary and secondary schools and into a top college." There have always been parents who have sent their children to private schools. The difference now is in the numbers and the reasons.

In the 1950s and 1960s James Conant was the most listened to and respected observer of the American high school. With foundation backing and enthusiastic support, this distinguished ex-president of Harvard and public servant conducted a national study that resulted in 1959 in *The American High School Today*. It is hard to imagine the same book being written now. While there were criticisms, particularly about bright students and small schools, the study's overall tone was one of optimism. "I can sum up my conclusions in a few sentences," Conant said. "The number of small high schools must be drastically reduced through district reorganization. Aside from this important change, I believe no radical alteration in the basic pattern of American education is necessary in order to improve our public high schools." His confidence contrasts sharply with the current pessimism, so much so that the study's conclusions strike the contemporary reader as almost naive. Yet, though his criteria for a good school seem too simple, Conant recognized the importance of leadership. "There are three requisites for the successful operation of a high school," he said. "First, a school board composed of intelligent, honest, devoted citizens who understand that their function is policy-making and not administration; second, a first-rate superintendent; third, a good principal."[11]

The emphasis on the principal's role persists. March's contention that "changing education by changing educational administrators is like changing the course of the Mississippi by spitting into the Allegheny," is a minority point of view. Most observers agree with Ronald Edmonds's conclusion that instructional leadership by the principal is one of the key ingredients of a good school, measured by how well students perform on standardized achievement tests. Its importance is enhanced when one considers that the other characteristics cited by Edmonds—emphasis on learning, climate, expectation, and evaluation—are in large part based on the principal's attitudes and behavior. They result from his direction. They are what people perceive in a school "turned around" by a strong leader.

Because of the importance of the topic, it is not surprising that an entire volume of the 1977 three-part study of the American high school by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) was concerned with effective principals.[12] Sixty administrators were chosen through a consen-

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sus procedure. The diversity of their characteristics supports the notion of a "situational model" of leadership, which means that a good principal in one school might do a poor job in another. According to this theory, there is no single set of qualities for all circumstances. The major strengths and weaknesses of these principals are rooted in personal characteristics and are therefore difficult to acquire or to eliminate through training. What the study suggests is that leaders are born, not made (or trained), and that any program to prepare principals will succeed if it selects good candidates.

I agree that leadership depends on the situation, but only within limits. In a relative sense, the particular assignment *does* make a difference. My experience has been that capable principals do reasonably well in any assignment. The trick is to have enough good people to go around and to place them where their strengths are best used. Leaders will always be in short supply, yet public education has made its job more difficult by relying almost exclusively on white males to be its high-school principals. Of those included in the 1977 NASSP study, 96 percent were white and 93 percent male. Incredible as it sounds, given the emphasis on women's rights and equal employment opportunity, the percentage of female principals had actually declined since the previous survey in 1965. There are still those who feel that the high-school principal's job is just too rough for a woman. To be snide about it, they may be the same ones who believe that all good principals are ex-coaches.

The qualities I look for in a candidate are not related to either sex or race: reasonable intelligence, communication skills (including listening), the ability to work well with people, confidence, and good health. State certification is a legal requirement, but the connection between it and qualification is at best tenuous.

What is striking is that good principals, without exception, work hard. They put in long hours (56.6 hours a week according to the 1977 survey), which is related to the importance they attach to high visibility. That includes being in the halls and around the campus, and extends to attending a wide variety of extracurricular activities and community functions. In some places, usually where the school serves a well-defined area with a strong sense of identity, the principal is a very important and influential leader. One principal that I interviewed said, with a great sense of pride, that over the years he had granted political endorsements, apparently with considerable effect. As one of them told me, "I consider three nights out a light week"—a not surprising comment, in view of their high visibility.

Despite the time demands, good principals like what they do. For a majority, being a principal is all they want. None of those I spoke with expressed a desire for any other assignment. Their satisfaction comes from knowing that they are doing well in a job that is difficult, important, and has considerable status. High-school principals see themselves—correctly—as occupying high places in the internal pecking order of the school system. They have more clout than their elementary school colleagues and enjoy considerable, albeit diminishing, autonomy. Even in large systems, with an extensive central office apparatus, effective principals apparently manage to minimize "downtown" incursions on their turf. Such skill may be part of the reason they are successful, though most experienced superintendents have enough appreciation

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for the difficulty of running a high school to allow competent people considerable leeway.

The principals in the NASSP study reported some differences in the planned and actual use of their time. As Table 1 confirms, principals commonly complain that management concerns take away from the time they can devote to curriculum and program development. I am not persuaded on the truth of this point. Although principals know they are expected to be instructional leaders, many are not very clear about that role or comfortable in it. Most are not very much interested in matters of teaching and learning. Even if that were not the case, it is both unreasonable and unrealistic to expect them to supervise and evaluate teaching in the dozen or so areas that make up the high-school curriculum. It makes more sense to recognize that, in sociological jargon, schools are "loosely coupled," which means that the learning activities of children and the teaching activities of teachers are only marginally related to the activities of administrators. Perhaps principals would be more effective if we were satisfied with their being good managers and setting the overall tone in the school, thereby providing an environment conducive to learning. It is not possible for a principal to provide any substantive instructional leadership in each of the ten or more subject areas in the high-school curriculum. That is best provided by departmental chairpersons, who are not properly appreciated nor well utilized in most schools. Sometimes chairpersons are given extra time off and salary supplements, but these are usually too small to attract good people. Giving prestige to the job by, among other things, added pay and extra time off would also be a way of recognizing good teachers without removing them completely from teaching. It is a sad commentary that the teaching profession rewards good practitioners by removing them from the classroom. There is an inverse relationship between proximity to the classroom and status—financial and otherwise.

Almost without exception, principals are former teachers. In most states, administrative certification requires such experience, even though it does not necessarily follow that a good teacher will make a good principal. The requirements of the two jobs are quite different. Insofar as personal traits can be observed, however, classroom experience may be a valuable prerequisite. In addition, being a faculty member helps an aspiring administrator learn how a

Table 1—Hours per Week Spent per Area

	Priorities (Planned to Spend)	Time Spent
Program (Instruction)	1	3
Personnel	2	1
Management	3	2
Student activities	4	4
District office	5	5
Community	6	6
Planning	7	9
Professional development	8	8
Student behavior	9	7

Source: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1977

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school operates and provides the opportunity to observe what a principal does. It also establishes the principal's credibility among teachers. So it is that law and custom combine in the tradition that principals come from the classroom. This is supported by incumbent principals who generally rate teaching experience as a valuable preparation for administration, much more so than their required programs of graduate study.

School administration courses, designed to fulfill state licensing requirements, do not get very high marks. The judgment of one principal that they were "generally a waste of time" reflected the prevailing opinion of those I interviewed. There are two reasons for this. The courses are often unrelated to the job itself; they simply are not helpful. Also, as has been indicated, effectiveness as a principal is heavily dependent on personal qualities that do not lend themselves to formal training. Although some of these qualities can be acquired, or at least improved upon, most are innate. The best place to determine their presence and extent is on the job. What one must know is also most appropriately learned there. That is why successful principals rank prior experience, as an assistant principal or in a comparable apprenticeship, as the most valuable form of preparation. It seems reasonable, therefore, that local school boards should be free to employ those who will run their schools, rather than being restricted to candidates who have endured a lengthy "credentialing" process that is generally acknowledged to be of dubious value. In my state, South Carolina, thirty-three semester hours are required for a principal's license. The major certifying institution, the University of South Carolina, adds six units to this. All of this, as in most states, is formal classwork. The apprenticeship required for those preparing to become teachers, and ranked by them as the most valuable part of their training, is lacking; there is nothing analogous to "student teaching" required of candidates in school administration.

Because of low standards in schools of education, almost anyone can be licensed to be a school administrator. In every state there are at present more certified applicants than jobs. Largely because of declining enrollment and budgetary reductions, the wait for appointment to a principalship is a long one. Many applicants are competent, but most will never be appointed.

If this free-market arrangement must continue, school boards ought to be given, at the very least, the option of selecting administrators without necessary reference to a largely ineffective sorting and training system mandated by states and controlled by schools of education. March's analogy to parenthood is apt:

> There is more than ordinary pretentiousness in the thought that we can improve educational administration through writing about it or through explicit programs for the selection and training of administrators. Books and formal training have somewhat the same relation to administration that they have to parenthood. Most of the knowledge, technics and beliefs that characterize American child rearing are learned from casual apprenticeships, recollections of childhood, on the job training and associates. Despite more academic rituals of certification, most of the practices of educational administration seem to come from a similar kind of experience and contacts.[13]

With this background, let me now deal with the issue of the principal as a middle man. One principal I interviewed described the consequence as "diminished autonomy." Although he understands why this has happened, the

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"less rewarding" nature of the job has led him to request early retirement after twenty years as the head of a highly regarded very large high school.

Americans have traditionally valued schooling, viewing it pragmatically as providing mobility and opportunity for their children. Though confidence has diminished, demands of the constituents remain strong. Among these is the expectation, bordering on the unreasonable, that education can somehow solve ills that the larger society cannot. The high school, the capstone of our public system, is the place where all these hopes and frustrations converge. The principal is called on to satisfy growing demands with diminished authority. He is caught in the middle in two ways—internally, between teachers and the school board, and externally, between the school and the community it serves. His freedom of action, for better or worse, has been curtailed by a series of constraints over which he has little control. Failure to understand this dilemma precludes any practical understanding of the problems, possibilities, and future direction of the American high school. Thinking back to the time I started teaching under Dr. Jones, and comparing it to the contemporary scene, there are several clear differences that help explain the current situation and illuminate, however dimily, where we are headed.

The principals I interviewed mentioned most often the constraints surrounding teacher selection and assignment. This is due primarily to the advent of collective bargaining, which over the past twenty years has altered drastically the working conditions of teachers, management prerogatives, and the governance of schools. Written agreements between employees and school boards to some degree regulate personnel relations in most metropolitan school systems outside the South. These agreements are usually based on the seniority principle, whereby assignment is determined by teacher preference in order of years of service. The more extensive the application of seniority, the less discretion the principal has in staff selection. Some principals complain that it is unfair to hold them responsible for a good program when they have so little to say about the selection of their faculty. This is so. It also happens, however, that some principals use the growth of "teacher power" as the reason they cannot properly supervise their staff. Having worked in both union and nonunion systems, I find little difference in the way administrators evaluate teachers.

Collective bargaining goes beyond staff assignment. Its aim in education is the same as it is everywhere—to protect the status and improve the salaries and working conditions of those who belong to the bargaining unit. That is the bottom line, and it does not necessarily follow that improving the lot of teachers redounds to the benefit of students. Teacher unions are like other organized groups, including those representing school administrators, in their emphasis on self-interest. Satisfying that interest almost always carries a price tag. Therefore, one of the inevitable consequences of collective bargaining, particularly in a field as labor-intensive as education, has been to increase expenditures and raise taxes. Critics of public education contend that quality has not kept pace with cost. Principals feel the pressure of having to provide extensive and expensive programs in a period of inflation and diminished public support. Money is not only tighter, but administrative discretion in spending has been curtailed as a result both of negotiated agreements and mandates over which the principal has little or no control.

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The agreements come from the bargaining table. The mandates result from legislative and judicial decisions. The federal role in education has expanded enormously since the mid-sixties. Although most would agree that laws to further the education of the handicapped (Public Law 94-142), minorities (Title VI), females (Title IX), and bilingual children (Title VII) are desirable, or at least well-intentioned, they impose requirements that the principal must enforce. The same is true with respect to judicial intervention in such areas as student due process, desegregation, and the rights of non-English-speaking children. Entitlements have been expanded significantly. The broadening of educational opportunity by legislatures and the courts is, at the same time, a constraint on principals. In the words of one observer, their "discretionary decision zone has been squeezed progressively into a smaller and smaller area." In addition to the mandates of higher authorities, the pressure from local sources has increased significantly. In mandating programs, federal laws have also, over the past several years, created advisory groups in which over one million citizens participate. Many of these groups are *pro forma*, but it would be a mistake to view them as just so many more PTA's.

Although it sometimes happens that community involvement takes on an adversarial tone, effective principals see it as a way of gaining support. If, for instance, financial constraints are to be eased, the public must be willing to raise taxes. Citizen participation requires the attention of principals, but the time is usually well spent. The occasional negative effects are nothing compared to the difficulties encountered when community apathy is prevalent, an apathy usually accompanied by a widespread lack of motivation among students. The two reinforce each other and produce a malaise common in high schools, particularly in central cities. Principals in the last national survey ranked parental apathy and student disinterest as the greatest deterrents to doing a good job. What results is a fatal loss of morale that affects everyone. A 1979 survey by the NEA asked teachers whether they could choose another career if they could do it over again; 32 percent said Yes. In 1966 the affirmative response was 9 percent.[14]

So it is that American high schools in the post-World War II period have increased in size and expanded their programs to assume enlarged responsibilities, most of which have been thrust upon them. At the same time, principals are caught between greater demands and diminished authority. Simply put, our high schools are being asked to do too much for too many with too little. One New York City principal that I interviewed expressed a view heard all too frequently:

> The public commitment—real commitment—just isn't there. Individuals and interested groups speak about the need for quality education, but they fail to come up with the resources. Reckless budget cutting, staff reductions, salaries that keep capable people from becoming teachers (and hurt the morale of the existing staff), the low esteem in which teachers are held, and the horror stories about schools in the media—all belie the claim that the public considers education a top priority. Unless that changes, and I don't see any signs that it will, we're not going to be able to do the things we know need to be done.

Henry Steele Commager has written that communities get the kind of schools they deserve. That does not minimize the obligation of educators; it

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does, however, acknowledge the reality that schools reflect their constituents. The shrinking and weakening of that support group explains, more than any other fact, the demoralization of American secondary education. Principals are trying to run schools in the face of powerful pressures that have diminished their authority. Union and community interests have enhanced their influence vis-à-vis school boards and administrators. Courts and legislatures have in recent years assumed a much more active role. But the demands exceed the resources. Fewer children and rising costs make dollars harder to come by. This is aggravated by widespread abandonment of public schools by the middle class and a growing presence in our largest cities of an isolated and powerless underclass. Ten percent of all public school children are in the nation's twenty largest cities, a majority of them from poor and minority families. These conditions make the need for good schools greater and, at the same time, more difficult to attain. The high-school principal is caught in this dilemma. Pressured from all sides, he is indeed the man in the middle.

The result of this enormous discrepancy between our goals and where we find ourselves has diminished confidence and brought about a degree of demoralization so great that it must be judged public education's major problem. Restoring that morale—among parents, teachers, and students—depends on several things:

1. Schools cannot be all things to all people; courts and legislatures need to be persuaded of this. Such an effort must anticipate opposition by vested interests within the educational system, interests that have in many cases been created by external decree. Driver training teachers, for example, would certainly oppose any suggestion that learning how to drive a car does not belong in the curriculum. In addition, teacher unions, already concerned about declining enrollment, cannot be expected to welcome program reductions that will further reduce their membership.

2. Programs must be adjusted to the reality of diminishing resources. This is difficult for a system geared to continuous expansion and a society accustomed to thinking that anything can be solved by education. There is also the political nature of school boards to be considered, as well as the strength of employee organizations and single-issue interest groups. Despite these influences, I believe a consensus can be developed that the priorities of public education ought to be the teaching of cognitive skills, an academically challenging program for abler students, and emphasis on those qualities of character that in a simpler day were called good citizenship.

3. For both ideological and political reasons, parents should be included in setting priorities. Their role in most communities is more passive than active. In many places it will be difficult to engage their interest. Occasionally, involvement is discouraged by school authorities, despite rhetoric to the contrary. There are, however, interested and active citizens in every community. Their efforts need to be given more status and authority. The school site advisory councils in California, Florida, and South Carolina, for example, recognize this and provide a promising approach to citizen participation.

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4. Where they have not been irretrievably bargained away, the prerogatives of management need to be preserved. Defining these prerogatives makes possible a clear formulation of the principal's responsibilities. Developing a fair and effective evaluation system is particularly important. Due process is necessary, and unions have done much to protect the legitimate rights of their members. It has reached the point, however, where tenure laws and collective bargaining agreements have made it virtually impossible to dismiss incompetents. One result of this is to provide administrators an excuse for not doing a thorough job of evaluating staff members.

Superintendents and school boards, supported by political and community allies, must assume the major responsibility for accomplishing these goals. The person most responsible for implementing policy and the educational program on a day-by-day basis, however, is the building principal. Despite the importance of the job, the training for it is poor. Not enough attention has been given to recruiting capable candidates, particularly among women and minorities, and the formal preparation is largely unrelated to what the principal must know and is required to do. Improvement in the quality of preparation should include encouraging school districts to develop their own training programs in collaboration with colleges of education. Improvement might also provide for some form of state accreditation to local school boards. If this is too big a step, there should at least be modification of certification requirements to allow greater participation by school systems in training their future leaders.

Finally, our conventional concept of the high-school principal as the instructional leader should be discarded. It is, in most cases, unrealistic. Principals are expected, largely on the basis of a few classroom visits, to assess the quality of instruction. They are responsible for doing this in all subjects. As a practical matter, the principal's judgments deal more with management than substance. As a result, evaluation is either inadequate or superficial. Informed judgments about content must include others, such as departmental chairpersons. This will improve high schools in two ways. Teachers will benefit from a better evaluation of their work, and the principal's job as an instructional leader will be more realistically defined. What I have termed the climate of a school is the measure of that leadership. The principal's role in creating the environment where learning takes place is a vital one. It is his most important task, and it cannot be assumed by anyone else. The morale of a school depends on how well it is done.

Accomplishing all of this will not be easy, nor will it guarantee the revitalization of the American high school. What is certain, however, is that without such an effort, our system of public education is in serious jeopardy.

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PATRICIA ALBJERG GRAHAM

Literacy: A Goal for Secondary Schools

TO READ, TO COMMUNICATE, TO COMPUTE, to make judgments, and to take actions resulting from them: these are legitimate expectations for our high-school graduates in America in the late twentieth century. Together these abilities constitute a special definition of literacy.[1] Some persons may find such a definition of literacy *too* special, preferring such a term as "critical rationality" to emphasize the differences between my use of literacy and past usage of the term. I wish to stress the continuity of changing historical definitions of literacy and the presumption of its universal value. To some, "critical rationality" may seem new, forbidding, and only for a few. "Literacy" connotes a set of skills that have changed over time, but that we have thought desirable for everyone to have, although not everyone has achieved them. My argument is that literacy, as defined here, is what *everyone* needs in late twentieth century America, both for their own and for society's good. This is a functional definition of literacy, bound by both time and place, and included in it are those cognitive skills that are important for an adult to function effectively in America today. High schools are the last required educational experience for our population. About 75 percent of our youngsters now graduate from high school. Therefore, literacy becomes a compelling goal for our high schools to help their students achieve.

Acceptance of such a goal implies recognition by high schools and the communities they serve that theirs is a specialized function. By committing themselves to assuring their students' literacy, high schools would be acknowledging that they are not multipurpose agencies, each of their purposes having equal importance. Rather, they are institutions whose primary obligation is education.

Literacy is a partial, but significant, element of education, It is also, and importantly so, a goal whose achievement or failure can be demonstrated. Traditionally, in this and many other countries, schools that accept a broad range of students are reluctant to admit to any single overriding aim. They prefer to stress the many services they perform, thereby minimizing responsibility for tasks left undone. They have in common an inability to make all their pupils literate. To expect high schools, then, to adopt the goal of literacy is to ask them to depart from their traditional pattern. For this they will need informed support from the public, not the carping criticism that has been much

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more common. And they will need to provide evidence that their students are achieving literacy.

Many adults participate in our society today with less than a full complement of the skills we associate with literacy. But they are not functioning as well as they might, and at least as important, neither is our society. Our individual citizens need these cognitive skills to achieve maximally, both vocationally and avocationally, just as our society, to be productive and fair, needs a citizenry with these skills. It is possible to achieve this essential universal literacy if as a society we choose to. We have not yet made this choice, although we have made significant strides toward it.

Many Americans today complain bitterly about the inadequacies of high schools and about the unsatisfactory preparation of high-school graduates. Such criticism of schools or concern about the young is not new; it is most common at times when substantial "new populations," such as immigrant, minority, or poor youngsters, are completing school. That the criticisms are familiar in no way vitiates their significance or their accuracy. Such criticisms are important, and those concerned about education in America ignore them at their peril. For high schools to accept literacy as a primary aim for their graduates, to develop community support for such a goal, and then to demonstrate that they fulfill it would be vital steps in assuring young people that they are not being cheated educationally; it would also assure the communities they serve that the schools were assuming one, if not all, of their responsibilities.

Even today such an aim as literacy for high schools does not win universal support among informed, intelligent Americans. Some claim that such a goal is too limiting, yielding too quickly to technicist solutions or pandering to the enthusiasts of minimum competency tests. Others observe that it fails to take account of many other important activities that a school should encourage, such as character development, civic virtue, or moral education. Still others, though they are less vocal, are disinclined to make the schools responsible for a primary, identifiable objective, the achievement of which can be determined. Teachers today, they imply, are not up to it. Few, I suspect , are opposed to literacy, but many are hesitant about making it a primary aim for high schools. This hesitation is not new. Even in 1916, when a special committee of the National Education Association was preparing the section on goals of public education for its Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, the first draft included six of the ultimate seven principles. These were "health education, home-making education, vocational education, social-civic education, education for the wise use of leisure, ethical education." The missing seventh was "command of the fundamental processes."[2]

Yet without the schools' explicit commitment to literacy, we will continue to sweep cognitive requirements under the pedagogical rug, preferring an orderly student body to a competent one, a cooperative, enthusiastic senior class to one that is academically eminent. No one wishes to see a dichotomy develop between the virtues of orderliness, cooperativeness, or enthusiasm and competence or academic eminence. Clearly all these qualities should be present among high-school seniors, and frequently they are. But, especially for the children of the poor, we have often believed that if they were orderly, cooperative, and

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enthusiastic in high school, that was enough. But that is *not* enough today, either for the children of the poor or the children of the wealthy, and that is what the critics correctly note.

To understand both the difficulty and the novelty of such a goal as literacy for secondary school graduates, especially when secondary schooling is no longer limited to a small fraction of the population, requires a review of our historical expectations for education in general and for secondary schooling in particular. Traditionally we have expressed our hopes for the consequences of both education and schooling in social terms, such as patriotism, morality, and mobility. Ironic as it may seem, we have rarely justified education in terms of the cognitive benefits it can provide, such as literacy. We have tacitly assumed in this society (and in most others) that the larger benefits to the society were more important than the cognitive ones to the individual. Nor have we investigated carefully the advantages to the society of a literate population. Therefore, in the sections that follow, two questions will be addressed. First, and most important, What have we as a nation expected of our educational efforts in the past? Second, What have we meant by literacy and expected of it in the past? The concluding segment of this essay suggests some reasons to justify the thesis that secondary schools should focus their efforts on making their students literate.

America's Past Expectations of Education

Why do we educate? The question persists, its answer changing as we reassess the needs of our society and revise our notions of what we want for ourselves and how to achieve our dreams. It is a lens through which we can see the changing nature of our aspirations for the good society and the varying pattern of our individual hopes. The lens reveals that we have always seen education as a means to an end, not as a desirable end in itself. Our attention has concentrated on the instrumental value of education, what education would do for us, either as a society or as individuals. Never have we justified education in terms of its inherent value.[3]

During the first half of our national history our educational needs were largely determined by perceptions of what the society needed and, therefore, what the educational system should do to achieve these necessary social goals. During the twentieth century the emphasis of our expectations for education shifted from the societal benefits education could confer to the individual advantages that could accrue from education. In other words, the society, which defined itself as having a set of collective needs during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, altered its self-definition in the twentieth to stress the individual needs and aspirations of its members.

This new stress had powerful consequences for the emerging educational institutions. During most of the nineteenth century the institutions believed that their primary obligation was to provide their students with the skills and attitudes that would allow them to perform the tasks the society needed. The new twentieth century emphasis for education was to provide individual advancement, a subtle, but profound, change in educational expectations. This

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shift has triggered substantial debate among Americans, although rarely has the issue of social goal versus individual goal been the focus of the debate.

Ironically, many of the harshest critics of the recent policies of enhancing individual gains through education have been those who consider themselves supporters of individualism and of free enterprise. They believe, apparently, that education should serve society's needs, not those of the individual. It is proper, they feel, for schools to instill patriotism, a societal need, but express concern about providing educational opportunities to youngsters so that they can become more economically competitive. Their enthusiasm for compensatory education programs, for aid to predominantly black colleges, and for financial aid to college students is limited.

The two aspirations, education for society's needs and education for individual advancement, are not necessarily contradictory. At their best, they are self-reinforcing. I believe that literacy as the primary aim of universal secondary schooling meets both the needs of the society and enhances the individual's opportunities for a fulfilling adult life. As a nation we seek the finest and most significant educational outcomes for our society when we seek maximum educational achievements for each of our citizens. Our society benefits most from educating each of our youngsters to the limit of his or her talents and temperament. So do the youngsters.

Two periods during America's first century provide illustrations of the proposition that education was to serve principally the needs of the society, not those of individuals. The first occurred immediately following independence as our nation was being formed; the second, in the late nineteenth century, as increasing national productivity became a prime concern. In the mid-twentieth century the principal rationale for education was the enhancement of individual economic mobility, although some of these views were expressed as part of the "Great Society" proposals.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

One crucial dilemma facing the leaders of the new nation at the end of the eighteenth century was how to create a sense of national identity. A corollary to that need was the recognition that a nation that organized itself around the consent of the governed needed some way to assure that the governed provided informed consent. Clearly, education appeared as a means of providing both the nationalism that all recognized as necessary to some degree and the informed intelligence that would allow the nation to trust its citizenry.

In 1789, during his first message to Congress as president, George Washington called for efforts to improve education. In his farewell address he reiterated his plea: "Promote, then, as an object of primary importance institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that the public opinion should be enlightened."[4] Convinced that education, including education supported by the federal government, was vital to the new nation, Washington set aside in his will $25,000 worth of shares of stock for the

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establishment of a national university. The company in which the shares were held failed, thus eliminating the bequest, but Washington's concern was clear. Despite repeated efforts by subsequent presidents and others, no national university was established.

Even more outspoken than Washington was Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia physician, whose 1786 essay, "Thoughts upon the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic," stands as a classic statement of the needs of the new nation for imbuing its citizens with a sense of national commitment. Rush epitomized those who believed that education should serve societal rather than individual needs, although there is no indication that he saw a conflict between the two. Rather, he simply believed that the needs of the new nation were so pressing that education should address itself to aiding the nation, and accordingly, he stated, "Let our pupil be taught that he does not belong to himself, but that he is public property," and "I consider it possible to convert men into republican machines."[5]

Rush's enthusiasm extended to the notion of a national university, and his commitment was such that in 1788 he urged that thirty years after the establishment of the national university (which he believed likely), only its graduates should be eligible for elective or appointive office. Although Rush himself had been educated abroad (at Edinburgh and London after receiving an AB from Princeton in 1760), he fervently advocated that higher education for America's future leaders should occur at home, a sentiment widely shared by Thomas Jefferson and others in post-Revolutionary America who were fearful of the susceptibility of the young to insidious foreign influences.

Jefferson, unlike Rush, was primarily concerned that the new government, founded as it was on the consent of the governed (or, at least, some of the governed), should have an informed, intelligent electorate. In what has become one of his most famous aphorisms, Jefferson wrote to Colonel Charles Yancey in 1816, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." Jefferson's notion of the appropriate governmental body to undertake this vital task was the state, a view that he expressed when he drafted three education bills (none of which passed) for the Virginia legislature in 1779. Jefferson's rationale for these bills—as well as for the ones later passed by the Virginia legislature in 1818 that laid the groundwork for a public school system and for the creation of the University of Virginia in 1825—lay in his belief in the necessity "to avail the state of those talents which Nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use if not sought for and cultivated."[6]

Both Rush and Jefferson shared the belief that education could and should be used as a tool to shape the society. Both were principally concerned with the social utility of education, the means by which education would mold the citizenry in ways that were necessary and desirable for the new nation. Rush's emphasis was on patriotism, certainly a necessary attribute for the new nation; Jefferson's somewhat more far-reaching concern was to nurture the informed intelligence of the populace, although his vision of the populace included only a minority of it—white males. Both recognized the need of the new national government for these attributes in its citizenry, but neither advocated that the

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federal government itself should undertake to organize and administer an educational system to provide these outcomes.

INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY

While persons in New England concerned with primary education concentrated on establishing publicly supported schools, another New Englander had a different notion of educational needs. Justin Morrill, elected as a Republican to the House of Representatives from Vermont in 1856, introduced legislation calling for the establishment of one or more national agricultural schools, similar to the naval and military academies. Morrill's intent was that students from each congressional district could receive a scientific and practical education at public expense. He believed the nation needed this new expertise to enhance its productivity, for he found that existing colleges were little interested in providing instruction in these subjects. Morrill subsequently would come to believe as well that inexpensive college education was also desirable for students from impecunious families. Morrill's attention in the mid-nineteenth century, however, was focused on the national need for increased agricultural and scientific productivity and the belief that educational institutions could supply to individuals the expertise to enhance productivity.

Defeated by the Southern Democrats in the late 1850s, and finally vetoed by President Buchanan in 1859, Morrill's bill finally passed in 1862 after the South had seceded, and was signed by Abraham Lincoln that same year. By that time, the legislation provided for federal land grants to each state to establish universities providing instruction in agriculture and the mechanical arts and also to provide training for military officers (the last a need the North perceived during the Civil War).

What is most striking to the contemporary American familiar with the land-grant institutions throughout the nation, and appreciative of the enormous broadening of educational opportunities for citizens they provide, is the relative absence of discussion on education itself during the debates surrounding the bill. Attention focused instead on the constitutionality of the government's actions and on the consequences of this use of public lands.

From 1862 to 1914 the various legislatively inspired efforts to provide federal aid to higher education had one unifying theme—that the product of that education, whether research, demonstrations, or instructed students, would be valuable to the United States in terms of improved industry and agriculture. Although Morrill certainly recognized the potential benefits to individuals of state-supported, low-tuition colleges, those advantages were inadequate to persuade his collegues to pass his bill. Other arguments had to be marshalled to convince them. But Morrill's argument, though unsuccessful in the late nineteenth century, would prove to be successful in gaining adherents in the twentieth, when equal educational opportunity became a professed national goal.

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

"Equal educational opportunity" has a substantial rhetorical history in this country. Early in the twentieth century it was invoked by advocates of vocational education programs for precollegiate students as justification for the

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"sorting according to probable destinies" that teachers ought to engage in when selecting children for vocational courses. Others, such as Edward C. Elliott, then a professor at the University of Wisconsin and subsequently president of Purdue University, in a speech to the NEA in 1908 adapted the terminology: " 'Equality of educational opportunity' bears every stamp of academic and philosophic abstraction. It never was, nor never will be, an ideal capable of realization. What we have, and shall attempt to bring about through our public school, is an *equilibrium*, a balancing, of educational opportunity."[7]

What is most interesting about Elliott's speech is his statement of relationship between the public school and the ideal of equality of educational opportunity, albeit he did not believe that it was an ideal capable, or perhaps even desirous, of realization. Nonetheless, in the twentieth century the shift in expectation for education was beginning. Individual educational outcomes were beginning to take precedence over societal ones, initially for the children of the well-to-do. Partly owing to the influence of the progressive movement in education, which emphasized the individual needs of each child and the creativity inherent in each, some educators were beginning to believe, and to argue, that their primary obligation was to the child, not to the society. From this came the call for individualized instruction. Typically, educators saw no conflict between educating each child to the limits of his or her abilities and society's needs for an educated citizenry. When educators sensed a possible tension between the two, they usually invoked the word *democracy* to cover both. "Democracy in education," many believed, allowed the two to exist in harmony. The harmony, though occasionally dissonant, continued through most of the first half of the twentieth century, aided by the rhetorical flourishes of the progressive education movement and its organizational mouthpiece, the Progressive Education Association.

The public's changed perceptions about American society is another explanation for this shift. From the time of its declaration of independence from England in 1776 through the nineteenth century, American society had reason to be concerned about itself. The nation had been beset by a revolution and several small international fracases—which it did not clearly win—and torn by a civil war. At the same time it was attempting to settle an unexplored continent, contain understandably hostile inhabitants of these uncharted lands, assimilate large numbers of new immigrants, and establish itself as a world power. Sometime early in the twentieth century many believed America had accomplished these prodigious tasks. It was time, some educators suggested, that the country begin to think about unleashing a child's inherent creativity, rather than educate the citizenry to serve the compelling needs of the society. But this unleashing had a class bias—the creativity of upper-class children was believed to be much more significant than that of children of the working-class.

Later in the century, but consistent with the move to express educational outcomes in terms of benefits to individuals, came direct statements about enhancing educational opportunity. Typically, this opportunity was envisioned as enlarged access to educational institutions from which certain individuals had been excluded, the rationale being that greater educational opportunities for these individuals would translate eventually into better jobs.

Thus, both the attempt to enhance creativity and the effort to increase educational opportunity addressed themselves primarily to individual educa-

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tional goals and only secondarily to societal benefits. Both were seen by many as luxuries a nation could afford when the energies of its citizens were not required for the more pressing tasks of gaining preeminence in the world.

Certainly, not all commentators on American society in the mid-twentieth century perceived equal educational opportunity as a luxury. The most perceptive, including Gunnar Myrdal in *An American Dilemma*, recognized that until *all* Americans could participate in the guarantees of the American creed, the goals we had promised ourselves as a society would not be fulfilled. Much of the inspiration for the civil rights activity and the federal legislation of the past twenty years rested on this same premise.

Within the last decade we have come to question both our international preeminence and our domestic capability and virtue. No longer do we as a nation feel as supremely confident as we did at the close of World War II, when both our power and our moral integrity—most believed—were unassailable. Our economy was strong, and educators could comfortably assert that a primary reason for educating children was the increased personal financial rewards that education would bring. In short, they would be upwardly mobile. In those days "equal educational opportunity" implied that all would be competitive in the labor marketplace on the basis of educational achievements. Free and untrammeled "access" to an educational institution presupposed access to the economy as a whole. Years of school attended per person and measures of the standard of living increased substantially in the United States following World War II. Many believed there was a cause-and-effect relationship. But today, others, particularly Christopher Lasch, arguing in *The Culture of Narcissism*, contend that democratization of education does not justify the public faith in it. Lasch concludes:

> The whole problem of American education comes down to this: in American society, almost everyone identifies intellectual excellence with elitism. This attitude not only guarantees the monopolization of educational advantages by the few; it lowers the quality of elite education itself and threatens to bring about a reign of universal ignorance.[8]

The economy today is no longer expanding at its previous rate, and the assertions that education alone provides upward economic mobility have been widely challenged. Furthermore, many Americans now recognize that "access" to institutions does not assure "attainment." To finish twelve years of school and to receive a high-school diploma no longer implies, as it once did, mastery of a broadly understood set of cognitive skills.

In the face of this social anxiety and of the perennial criticism of our schools, we need to find a *raison d'être* for our schools—particularly for our high schools, where the problems are most severe—that will enhance individuals, serve the society, and be feasible for the school. Such a goal is literacy.

Past Meanings and Expectations of Literacy

Historical definitions of literacy and expectations for it have varied enormously, and as a consequence, as one leading contemporary historian of literacy, Harvey Graff, notes, it has been "profoundly misunderstood."[9]

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Definitions of literacy in America have varied from the assumed ability to read by virtue of the demonstrated ability to sign one's name (the colonial measure used in varying fashions by Kenneth Lockridge and Lawrence A. Cremin) to the self-proclaimed ability to read and write (the U.S. Census definition, beginning with the 1840 census).[10]

Until this century discussions on the subject emphasized illiteracy. Literacy was the demonstration that one was *not* illiterate. It is a great deal easier to provide evidence that one is not illiterate, a fixed state, than to show the extent of one's literacy, a much more fluid condition.

Throughout much of the colonial period and the early nineteenth century, merely assurance that one was not illiterate was quite adequate. The demands made on the entire populace for the sophisticated use of literacy skills were modest. Simple reading of the catechism, familiar selections from the Scripture, and hymns were considered sufficient literacy. In recent years the growth and circulation of newspapers in early America is taken as evidence of literacy by the population.[11] Most would agree that the fluency acquired from reading newspapers did not translate, at least for the majority of those who could read, into a like fluency in writing. Despite the well-known extensive correspondence of such leaders as Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, most Americans were not given to prolonged efforts at writing. And those who did write privately in diaries or to families and friends often demonstrated a cursory acquaintance with the rules of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Examples of the work of early nineteenth century schoolmasters provide similar illustrations of uncertainties with the English language.

During the twentieth century, graded schools became common throughout the United States, and enrollment in the lower grades became nearly universal. For a variety of reasons many schools commonly retained children in the lower grades until they had demonstrated satisfactory achievement of the primary curriculum. The essence of the primary grade requirements was learning to read, and the U.S. Census legitimized this activity by assuming in its 1940 census that all persons who had completed the fourth grade could read. This example of bureaucratic determination shifted the definition of literacy from acquisition of a skill to completion of a course.

The reading level required for fourth-grade work traditionally has been the final stages of "word recognition," before one moves to the cognitively more complex stage of "reading comprehension." A fourth-grader is expected to recognize the words in a sentence and to be able to explain what they mean; fifth-graders and more advanced students are supposed to read a paragraph and be able to make inferences from what they have read. For example, a person who reads the directions for assembling a chair and merely recognizes words such as "leg," "screw," or "base" is reading at a level similar to primary students. If the directions are explicit and clear, the reader may still be able to assemble the chair without having to make any inferences (or the person may be able to assemble the chair without any literacy skills if he or she knows something about chairs). If, however, the item to be assembled is unfamiliar to the reader and the instructions are not entirely clear, the reader must then make inferences from the reading. The reading skills one must have to do this were in short supply among our population in the past (when relatively few needed

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them), but are now much more widely required by the demands of ordinary life for substantial portions of our population.

Except for those in the heart of major American cities, nearly all adults possess drivers' licenses. These documents have become universal forms of identification within the past forty years, somewhat like the "identity cards" common in Europe. The reading skills necessary to pass a written test based on information in the drivers' manual are very much greater than the reading skills necessary to recognize the destination of the bus, trolley, or interurban train that, before the automobile, were the primary means of transportation. That is one indication of how literacy demands for the society have changed.

Some very common reading requirements for Americans today are too difficult for nearly all of us. One classic example is the income tax form. Experts in assessing difficulty in reading have assigned estimates ranging from grade 10 to grade 12 to these forms.[12] Only about half the U.S. population have completed grade 12, and many who have and who can afford it prefer to have someone else compute their tax and complete the forms. Unless their reading skills have improved substantially as adults, those Americans who have not completed high school or who do not have reading skills equivalent to grade 10 will have grave difficulties.

Literacy standards in America today are much more demanding than in the past. Daniel Resnick, a historian specializing in the history of literacy in the United States and Western Europe, has characterized the new mass literacy standard as "reading skills that permit the deciphering of unfamiliar material and the application of old knowledge to new contexts."[13] Previously these kinds of skills were required of only a small minority of Americans.

John R. Bormuth, who writes from the disciplinary perspective of an economist, contends that a large and growing fraction of our nation's population has reached a high and increasing level of literacy. Further, he argues that literacy is and has been worth far more than what it has cost to produce; that literacy is one of our nation's most important economic activities; and that personal and social investments in literacy have been growing rapidly.[14]

Both Resnick and Bormuth are committed to the value of literacy for the population. Although Bormuth promises more for his particular kind of literacy than does Resnick, each is optimistic about reaching larger proportions of the American population with these more demanding literacy standards.

Taken together, these examples illustrate several contentions about literacy in America: (1) levels of literacy expected of Americans have risen greatly, particularly in this century; (2) the proportion of the population that needs these literacy skills has expanded enormously to become nearly universal; (3) school grade completion is not a uniform assurance of literacy.

What we have meant by literacy in the past, then, is an escalating series of cognitive demands, beginning with verbal requirements for reading and signing one's name. The definition of literacy that I am using for America today is "the ability to read, communicate, compute, make judgments, and take actions resulting from them." That is clearly a vastly more encompassing set of demands than simply signing one's name, but literacy levels resemble poverty levels: what was previously adequate no longer is. Indoor plumbing, central heating, and hot running water were no more common in eighteenth century

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America, however desirable they would have been both for the individual and the society, than were men who wrote essays, women who criticized them, or blacks of either sex who acted as a result of reading them. Standards have risen substantially.

What, then, have we expected of literacy? Literacy, like education generally, has frequently been seen as having instrumental value, of leading to something worthwhile. Traditionally, we have argued that literacy would stimulate intelligence, increase morality, facilitate employment, and spur modernization.

Psychologists speculate vigorously over the cognitive consequences of literacy. Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole have argued from their research with the Vai in Liberia that "the effects of literacy, and perhaps schooling as well, are restricted—perhaps to the practice actually engaged in or generalized only to closely related practices."[15] Further, they did not find that "literacy in the Vai script was associated in any way with generalized competencies such as abstraction, verbal reasoning, or meta-linguistic skills." They have continued their exploration of a framework they term "a practice account of literacy" to explain the way literate persons learn.[16] The issue, of course, is what "practices" a given society requires of its citizens and what the best means are by which those citizens learn those practices. Mastery of written language, other psychologists have argued, stimulates clear, logical thinking, thereby enhancing cognitive development.

Whether the process of becoming literate makes you smarter or not is an issue of substantial significance to psychologists attempting to develop a systematic theory of cognition. For the rest of us living in late twentieth century America, the question is not how literacy will enhance our abilities, but rather the infinite disadvantages of being illiterate *in this society now*. Interesting implications for forms of schooling and instruction drawn from the research of these psychologists may perhaps beneficially influence the ways we make people literate in the future, as Scribner is investigating with adult workers in Maryland now. Undoubtedly, our efforts to make our entire population literate will require new techniques for reaching all persons. But we must make the attempt, because to be illiterate today is too limiting for the individual and for the society.

A second major claim for literacy has been morality. Horace Mann was fond of assuring Massachusetts audiences in the mid-nineteenth century that vice would be reduced if children were properly schooled. Carl Kaestle has summarized nineteenth century American and British views on mass schooling and the literacy that would likely result.[17] He contends that they favored such schooling because they believed it would enhance social stability and reduce crime. All would agree that an important theme underlying efforts to bring about public support of schools in the nineteenth century was the argument that a literate population was more likely to be moral than an illiterate one. Literacy and morality were thought to be as causally related as illiteracy and vice. Twentieth century evidence (as well as much in the nineteenth that the reformers ignored) obviously refutes any simplistic assumption that to be literate is to be moral. Literacy rates in Nazi Germany were among the highest in the world at the time of the Holocaust.

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A third claim for literacy has been that it facilitates employment. As Harvey Graff argues in his study of several nineteenth century Canadian cities, such was not always the case. "Literacy may well be important to some artisan functions," he writes, "but no evidence exists that it is central in their work processes. Learning a job surely remained empirical—by seeing and doing and gaining experience on the job."[18] In the twentieth century, however, one could argue that literacy has become a much more crucial requisite for employment. Employers' complaints about high-school graduates who cannot read instructions remind us of the greater literacy demands that our society makes for employment. Popular concern with "functional illiteracy" and its perils abound on television and in print. Nonetheless, as unemployment figures in Western Europe, especially Scandinavia, illustrate, and as the underemployment of recent Ph.D.'s in the humanities in the United States attests, literacy alone will not assure a job commensurate with one's preparation. Lack of literacy, though, appears to be a significant detriment to employment. The argument for literacy, then, is not one based simply on employability. As Rose Marie Weber has argued, "Education does not create economic prosperity but rather follows on it."[19]

Finally, literacy reportedly spurs modernization. The enormous literature of economic development in recent years assures us that when 40 to 60 percent of the population has become literate, in a basic sense we have reached the threshold at which modernization can occur.[20] UNESCO has led in urging campaigns for literacy, especially in regions of the world where literacy levels are low and "modernization" is sought. At the 1975 conference at Persepolis, Iran, various views on the desirability of literacy were expressed.[21]

Literacy as an Aim for High Schools

We have seen that literacy does not necessarily make the Liberian Vai smarter, or make societies more moral or guarantee good jobs, and we have seen, finally, that some level (amount unknown) of basic literacy is necessary for modernization. What, then, does literacy bring to a postmodern society like ours? Despite the critics who berate the linguistic capability of our population, we in the United States in the late twentieth century are a literate society in the way we *formerly* defined the term. We are not a universally literate society in the manner in which I have defined the term as a goal of secondary education today. But we should be, for many reasons. Literacy enhances our humanity. If we are literate in late twentieth century America, we expand the ways in which we can learn, understand, and appreciate the world around us. Through literacy we enlarge the range of our vicarious experience, both through our command of written materials and through formulation of new ideas demanded by the rigors of writing and speaking. We are able to enlarge our competence if we are literate because we have additional tools to use in exploring the world. To learn, to express, to decide, and to do—all elements in the definition of literacy given here—together permit us to become more autonomous individuals, less circumscribed by the conditions of social class, sex, and ethnicity into which we are born. Though cognitive in origin, these elements can be utilized, if we choose, to increase not only our intellectual capacities but also our affective domains as

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well, for ease in reading and understanding material broadens the opportunities for new kinds of learning that one can enjoy.

Lawrence A. Cremin has written about "inert" literacy, which enables one only to sign a document or to recognize the catechism, and "liberating literacy, in which a growing technical competence is combined with expanding motivation, expanding need, and expanding opportunity." More recently Cremin wrote of the relationship of "liberating literacy" to providing access to written materials that "can open people's minds to change, new ideas and influences, to new goals and aspirations," to systematizing and individualizing experience, and to creating a demand for more literacy.[22] The point, I believe, is that with "liberating literacy" one has the capacity to undertake such valuable activities, although one also has the option not to. That "liberating literacy" does not in all instances open people's minds, systematize their experience, or create a demand for more literacy does not discredit it. The power to do so is there, and I can think of no other cognitive set of skills that would allow those options. That is the rationale for literacy—not that a literate person eventually *will* do those desirable things, but that the literate person *can*.

Literacy also enhances our society. If our population's cognitive skills were fully developed, these could be utilized in the society and contribute to its development. This would make for a situation very much different from what we know now in this country. Educational attainments are still strongly influenced by social class, sex, and race, and only a portion of the talents of the society are developed. A population that is fully literate, as defined here, will provide an incomparable opportunity for a postmodern industrialized society like ours in the late twentieth century.

Here, as in other industrialized societies of the West, concern about declining productivity is widespread. The sources are multiple, and only some are related to perceived deficiencies in literacy. To the extent that productivity declines are a consequence of workers' and managers' inability to read, communicate, compute, make judgments, and take actions resulting from them, universal literacy would be salutary for the society. Many groups within the society deplore what they consider to be the inadequate literacy skills of the adults whom they hire—or refuse to hire because of their deficiencies. Employers regularly cite the limitations of their employees to explain errors in the business or its low productivity. The military forces claim that the dearth of well-qualified personnel is a threat to our national security. Improved literacy undoubtedly would contribute to improved productivity. Even more important, without literacy inadequacies to blame, perhaps we would seek other, more fundamental explanations of declining productivity.

Literacy, then, is best understood as valuable in and of itself to young Americans and to their society in the late twentieth century. While David Olson has warned that "such an overwhelming concern with literacy can only increase one's suspicions that the significance of a universal high degree of literacy is grossly misrepresented," he has also observed that "the consequences of a high degree of literacy are sufficiently critical to our society to warrant our continuing efforts to improve educational programs and to make the products of literacy available to a higher proportion of our citizenry."[23] The danger with literacy, just as with the broader subjects of schooling or education, is that we

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will promise too much for it, and perceptive critics will discredit literacy as a goal because it does not accomplish all that is mistakenly promised for it.

Thus understood, literacy becomes the first priority for high schools to require of its graduates. Clarity on this point is important, because acceptance of literacy as the first goal of high schools does not eliminate other vital aims for high schools. What it does imply is that the high school has failed if it does not make its students literate.

Some schools will have their tasks in this regard vastly simplified because of the skills and attitudes that their students bring from home. Other schools will not be so blessed. The obligation of the school is to make *all* students literate, whether the student's home is reinforcing or not. Schools traditionally have made only those students literate for whom literacy came relatively easily, either because the child's family insisted on it or because the child did. If neither the family nor the child appeared interested, the school assumed it could also ignore the need for the child to become literate. It no longer can, for schools, both public and private, are agencies that serve both the individual and the public purposes. Literacy is essential both for the individual and the society in the late twentieth century, and the high school is the institution with the unique responsibility to assure it.

We have never utilized all we know about how to make everyone literate, largely because universal literacy was never perceived by secondary schools as an expected goal. For literacy to become their first goal will require substantial changes in the organizational plans of many.

What is most encouraging about the situation is that some schools that have not previously achieved broad academic success with their students are now doing so. They are proving what Jerome Bruner, Benjamin Bloom, Robert Glaser, and others have argued for years, namely that most students can learn most things we associate with literacy if the material is presented in a way that is accessible to them. Traditionally, in high school we have expected the youngster to adjust to the pedagogical technique the teacher selected. Rarely have we at the high-school level, as we more commonly have at the elementary level, modified the pedagogical strategy to accommodate the learner. We have known for decades that lecturing was the easiest method for the teacher to prepare and for controlling the class, but it was not an ideal learning environment for many students. In the past those youngsters who could not or did not wish to adjust themselves and their learning styles to the routines of the high schools either dropped out, were truant, or were pushed out. That is no longer a satisfactory solution, and we are forced to reorient our high schools to teach in a variety of ways.

The final requisite in achieving universal literacy with our high-school graduates is the shared social conviction that such literacy is necessary both for the individuals and for the society. That consensus must extend to the political realities. We must recognize that if we put the children of the poor together in schools, especially if they are black, some persons working in those schools, and others responsible for funding and administering them, will feel less compelled to assure their literacy than if they are children of the wealthy, especially if they are white. Our concern must be with providing school conditions in which *all* our children can become literate.

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Johan Galtung has written: "What would happen if the whole world became literate? Answer: not so very much, for the world is by and large structured in such a way that it is capable of absorbing the impact. But if the whole world consisted of literate, autonomous, critical, constructive people, capable of translating ideas into action, individually or collectively—the world would change." Galtung concluded: "So what would happen if the whole world became literate? Quite a lot, in fact—if we dare define it broadly enough and take the consequence of trusting the people who are given, and themselves develop further, the tools of reading and writing."[24] Making secondary students literate is one step to the larger one Galtung envisions, but more important, in this society literacy will be valuable to the individuals even if the world does not change.

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[1]See my "Whither Equality of Educational Opportunity?" *Daedalus*, Summer 1980, pp. 115-132, for a discussion of the origin of this definition and its importance for schools. I am indebted to Harvey Graff, Carl Kaestle, Sylvia Scribner, and Ramsay Selden for conversations and sharing unpublished material with me. Thomas D. Parker assisted in initially formulating this definition of literacy.

[2]I am indebted to David Tyack for reminding me of the discussion of this point in Edward A. Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School, 1880-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp. 384-85.

[3]The instrumental use of education is a theme common to much literature on the history of education. From Morton White's study of John Dewey's instrumentalism in *Social Thought in America* (New York: Viking Press, 1949) to Harvey Graff, *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), authors have noted the lack of commitment to education for its sake alone. My own earlier arguments on this subject are in Fourth Annual Report, National Council on Educational Research, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), chapter 3, pp. 17-19.

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[13]Daniel Resnick, "Social Environments for Text: An Historical View of Literacy, Literacy Standards, and the Textbook," paper presented at National Institute of Education Conference on Textbooks in American Education, Washington, D.C., 1979. See also Daniel Resnick and Lauren

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[23]David Olson: review of "Toward a Literate Society," in *Proceedings of The National Academy of Education* 2 (1975), p. 149.

[24]Johan Galtung, "Literacy, Education, and Schooling—For What?" (Oslo: University of Oslo, mimeo copy, 1976), pp. 1, 24. I encountered this essay early in my readings for this article and subsequently have discovered it has also been widely cited, particularly by Harvey Graff, both in *The Literacy Myth*, p. 322, and "The Legacies of Literacy," p. 26. Galtung's entire essay, prepared for the Persepolis conference, also appears in *A Turning Point for Literacy*, Leon Bataille (ed.).

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GERALD GRANT

The Character of Education and the Education of Character

SEVERAL YEARS AGO near Harlan, Kentucky, a young priest led me up a washed-out mountain road to see some children at home before I visited the local public schools. When we reached the house, really a shack propped up on cinder blocks, the children peered shyly at the stranger. There were seven of them, barefoot and poorly dressed. The next morning I saw one of the youngest, Jay, in his one-room school, a few miles down a winding road past heaps of coal slag. It, too, was a kind of shack, except that, unlike Jay's house, it had some paint on the clapboards. Inside, a young teacher whose blackboard instructions suggested she might have trouble passing a grammar and vocabulary test, did her pleasant best to teach Jay and his classmates. There were a few books in the corner near a wood stove and little in the way of games or enrichment materials.

In the afternoon I visited the Middle School, a substantial brick building attended by Jay's sisters and brothers. This looked more like a mainstream American school. There was evidence of several new federal aid programs, including one staffed by two "reading specialists" who sat in the back of a classroom reading *Watchtower*, but I doubted their effect on Jay's family.

When I left Kentucky, Jay's life seemed bleak, and the schools within his reach gave little hope for significantly improving his prospects. Yet, some schools could make a great difference. If Jay were sent to live with an aunt in Brookline, Massachusetts, he would enter a different world. Even if his aunt did not live in an affluent section of Brookline, but in one of its crumbling borders abutting the Boston city limits, he would be absorbed, perhaps frightened, by a radically different intellectual, social, and aesthetic culture. His classmates, many of them Jewish, would be two or three years above the national averages on standard tests of verbal and mathematical ability. Whereas he might never have seen a violin in his one-room school in Kentucky, here in third grade every child would be given a violin and learn to play some simple tunes on it. By the time he got to Brookline High he might be speaking a different language in terms of his cognitive capacities in English, as well as speaking French or Spanish. Some of his teachers would have degrees from prestigious universities and would encourage him to think of college choices, since nearly all of his classmates would continue. Jay would have moved from a state that spent an annual average of $1,264 per pupil to one that spent $2,261.

Of course, Jay's aunt and the quality of his home life would be critical in his adjustment to the school. It would matter greatly if, on the one hand, his aunt

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had left Kentucky to become a slightly alcoholic waitress who worked nights, or if, on the other, she had joined the WAVES, seen something of the world, had become a teacher who loved literature, and developed a circle of friends that gave some amplitude and cheer to her life. The capacity to provide nurture and discipline matters. We have fresh evidence from recent British studies confirming the importance of simple rules and sanctions in the home by adults who are there to enforce them—rules to limit television viewing, establish curfews, and set time aside for homework. Such parental supervision explains more of the differences in juvenile delinquency rates than do differences in social class as such.[1]

In the United States, James Coleman's remarkable survey, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, argued that the combination of social class and family background explained the most significant differences in cognitive outcomes among schools.[2] Coleman's major finding was that the schools, at least as then constituted, had little effect on overcoming the disadvantages children brought from home. This was popularly interpreted as meaning schools have no independent effects, which Coleman himself never said. He would agree, for instance, that without schools many children would never learn mathematics or understand the principles of science. He simply pointed out that schools seemed powerless to reduce inequality in the cognitive deficits between groups of pupils. The children themselves were the dominant influence in establishing the ethos of the school, and if you wanted to change that climate, Coleman argued,[3] you should change the pupil mix.

Now—again from across the Atlantic—in an ingenious study by Michael Rutter and his colleagues, *Fifteen Thousand Hours*, our attention is directed to the action of responsible adults in shaping the ethos of the school.[4] Unlike Coleman, who surveyed students and teachers at one particular time to discover the correlations between the inputs and outputs of schooling, Rutter followed the same twenty-seven hundred pupils from the end of elementary school through twelve different secondary schools in South London. Suppose Jay's aunt lived on the Boston side of the Brookline boundary rather than in Brookline itself. According to Rutter, it might be of the greatest significance which Boston high school he was bused to. Rutter's research shows that it is necessary to have a core of able pupils around which a good climate or ethos in the school can be formed. Having this solid core, the school can then absorb many poor and difficult pupils while achieving successful outcomes in both social and cognitive terms. Rutter showed that climates do differ markedly in schools with similar intakes of pupils, and that these differences in intellectual and social climates have real effects on student success in school-leaving exams and whether or not pupils wind up in trouble with the law. A primary-school child who is identified as potentially troublesome at age ten has a 48 percent probability of delinquency if he goes to Secondary School A, but only a 9 percent likelihood if he goes to School B, although both schools enroll roughly the same proportion of "difficult" children.

Rutter argues convincingly that these differences in climate between schools have effects in achievement and patterns of delinquency that are independent of a pupil's intelligence or home background. The climate is like a tide that lifts the success and standards of behavior of all students within the school, although it does not reduce the variations among pupils in the same school.

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Since Rutter was interested in both the forms and consistency of discipline in a school, he asked a sampling of adults how they would respond to ten specific disciplinary problems, which the researchers came to call "The Naughty Children Scale." For example, they were asked, "What would you do about a very quiet first-year child who is stealing small items from other pupils and keeping them in his/her locker?" In some of the schools there was no consensus at all, while in others staff and teachers generally agreed about what would be done in such a case. Shared perspectives about discipline were associated with better outcomes.

Three broad patterns emerged from Rutter's findings. First, schools differ in the expectations they have for pupils in ways that are independent of actual abilities or disposition to misbehavior. In the schools with favorable outcomes, teachers expected pupils to do well on exams, regularly assigned and marked homework (which turned out to be much more important than the amount of *time* pupils spent on homework), expected pupils to act responsibly, and gave them an opportunity to do so through appointments to quasi-supervisory posts. Teachers also conveyed their expectations in the way they behaved themselves. Students achieved more and exhibited better conduct in those schools where teachers were punctual, started lessons on time, and taught a full period. Teachers in one school spent more than a third of class time in nonsubject matter activities (chatting about sports, attending to administrative matters, fiddling with the projector, or cleaning up), while in others the average loss of teaching time was less than 15 percent. Expectations are also created by senior staff. In some schools the teachers knew that senior staff were checking to see whether they had set reasonable homework assignments, and in other schools teachers thought their superiors did not care.

Second, Rutter's data show that consistency and shared norms are strongly related to both better behavior and exam success. Good schools are like good families: specific forms of punishment matter less than that the parents—or teachers—are generally fair and consistent, both about the standards they expect and the penalties for transgressing them. Schools in the sample differed both in their consensus about goals (based on staff ranking of goals that range from "helping students to develop their personality" to "preparing them for a job") and in their agreement about means for achieving them. In the poorest performing schools, teachers taught pretty much as they wanted, whereas results were better when teachers engaged in joint planning. This incidentally also resulted in higher morale, because it reduced the staff isolation that is typical in elementary and secondary schools.

Third, schools vary significantly in the kinds of rewards they provide for pupils. On the average, Rutter shows there was three times as much punishment as reward. But the differences among schools were great, and the outcomes in both conduct and delinquency were better in those schools where teachers frequently praised pupils' work. Schools that took students on outings more often also had better academic results, as did schools whose staff were willing to see pupils about a problem at any time, not just during stated hours.

Rutter's work as well as Coleman's latest research[5] indicate that our previous measures of school differences were too crude to reveal very significant differences in school climates, and that these climates–which are created by teachers and staff as much as by what pupils bring to the school—do have real

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effects. We do not know as much about what may cause these differences or how climates are created. The most important thing may be the ability of the head teacher or principal to engender trust with the staff and to engage in conversation with teachers about essential matters; all the rest—consistency, expectation, and enabling conditions—may flow from that.

Several studies of American schools have argued that they are "loosely coupled" organizations. Karl Weick suggests that such schools are characterized by tenuous connections among components, a confusion of goals, unresponsiveness to directives, and an absence of linkages one would expect if the system were more rational.[6] Teachers who were interviewed by Dan Lortie seemed to feel a "good day" is one in which they experience little interference by the administrators or others and are able to do what they want in the classroom.[7] Indeed, Philip Cusick, in a highly imaginative study of personal networks among teachers, found that teachers valued their autonomy and that not much of a network exists.[8] Reading Rutter's work in this context prompts the question: What makes the difference between a school with very loose bonds and one that has a strong sense of shared purpose that seems to create a good climate for learning?

For the past two years, my colleagues and I have been trying, through participant observation in a small sample of schools, to understand how a given climate is created. Our focus has been goal-oriented action within the school and the struggles that teachers and administrators engage in to achieve certain ends. We came to see that to understand the character, or climate, of a school, one had to understand the relationship between intellectual and moral climates on the one hand and the nature of authority on the other. Americans who hear the word *authority* tend to think of authoritarianism, but of course no social organization can be sustained if it is not grounded in some form of authority. Authority truly understood means "the rightful use of power to create the means of coordination of action."[9] That power resides in persons and is exercised through a command, or as Yves Simon puts it, "through a practical judgment to be taken as a rule of conduct by the free will of another person." The essential function of authority is to assure the united action of a multitude in the pursuit of some common good. Empirically, Michael Rutter's measures for consistency in disciplinary measures, level of shared expectations among teachers with respect to homework, and average time spent in teaching seem to indicate the presence or absence of such a "means of coordination."

It is the way that authority is instituted as well as the manner in which it is exercised that shapes the intellectual and moral character of a school. There are three aspects or components of that authority, and they can be thought of as three concentric circles. In the inner circle are those adults who give commands and who have primary responsibility for the school's functioning. As Rutter shows, it is the quality and vision of the leadership, teachers, and staff of a particular school who, were they not constrained by other forces, could make a difference in the character of education by the policies, traditions, and norms they establish in that school. But they are bounded by the second circle—which was the element most discussed by Coleman in his earlier work—the ethnic and social-class mix of the students, which is an imperfect indicator of more complex parental influences such as motivation for achievement, disposition to schooling, and behavioral norms.

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The third major component—the outer ring—is made up of external policies or constraints, federal, state, and local governmental policies, as well as the courts and an increasing number of nongovernmental agencies that make policy and establish the context within which the schools must function. In addition to the greatly expanded role of federal and state regulation, testing agencies exert a large influence on the aims of education, textbook publishers shape the content of the school curriculum, and an array of new advocacy groups are making policy through the courts.[10]

If we visualize these three layers as the skin, flesh, and seeds of a fruit, the American high school of 1900 was like an avocado. Its center of adult power and initiative was unified and virtually impregnable, its meaty middle layer of students was fairly homogeneous, and its skin of external policy was thin and clearly defined. The high school of 1950 was more like a cantaloupe, a good middle-class fruit with a considerably expanded student body. External policies such as regents' examinations and curriculum guides in the more progressive states had grown somewhat, but at the center there was still considerable room for adult action and initiative. If the staff were more specialized, they were still bound together in a net of connective tissue. The high school of 1981 is like a watermelon, with a thick rind of federal and state policy, a greatly expanded and diverse student body, and no clearly definable center. Like watermelon seeds, the adult specialists are dispersed throughout it, and commands—often in conflict—issue from a variety of locations.

Of course, all such typifications are exaggerations, and historical transitions cannot be demarcated so distinctly. In fact, each type of high school exists today. If we think of the watermelon rind as being an accretion of bureaucracy, court orders, union contracts, and new measures of accountability—nearly all of which were by-products of efforts to correct injustices—it is most typical of urban schools. The cantaloupe can still be found in many rural and suburban areas where the student composition remains fairly homogeneous and community consensus acts as a buffer to litigation-prone interest groups. In search of the avocado, we must leave public education and enter the world of private schools. The great paradox in American education today is that only the privates have a public in the classical sense. The greatest shift that our friend Jay could make would be to transfer from a public high school in Boston to a Quaker or Jesuit high school, or to St. Paul's or Andover. It is the line between private and public that represents the most radical division in the character of American education today.

Public education in urban areas today is increasingly instrumental, technicist, adversarial, and officially value-neutral, all a result of good intentions gone awry and an uncritical faith in what schools alone can do to solve social ills. American public schools shouldered an enormous share of the burden of creating a more equal society. As the schools became a primary avenue for the social initiatives of the sixties and the seventies, mountains of new law and regulation piled up, radically altering the freedom of action that adults in the school had previously enjoyed, and uprooting old communities and established ways of acting.

The new laws and programs also created legions of new specialists and technicians in the schools, whose salaries were paid through federal and state funds, and who therefore often felt less loyalty to the school principal or to the

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school's traditional authority structure. One of the elementary schools in our sample has ninety-one staff persons. Of these, only thirty-three are teachers with full-time classroom responsibilities. Twenty-three are resource persons on duty for significant parts of the day and week: social workers, psychologists, music teachers, art, reading specialists, fourteen full-time aides, and two co-principals. Thirty years ago, with a similar enrollment, the school had only one principal, one secretary, a janitor, a teacher in each class, no aides, one art teacher, and one part-time physical education instructor. A shift in that magnitude has enormous implications for leadership, for the task of creating a means of coordination within the school. It is much more complex than the problem of wider span of control, for what these numbers reflect is the growth of separate professional cultures in the school. New roles are being shaped, statuses competed for, and conflicting ideologies or modes of interaction with the child tested. Our field notes are replete with instances of these tensions. Teachers are disgruntled because psychologists make decisions about placing children in their classrooms without consulting them. Teachers who are responsible for an in-school detention room complain that counselors are unavailable when needed, because "they are always in meetings or interviews and can't be disturbed." Aides feel they should have equality with the teachers in the classroom and are reluctant to accept direction.

When federal and state funds were provided to achieve new aims, the government was naturally interested in whether targets were being met. These new strings, together with traditional concerns for efficiency (now married to a new technocratic faith that things could work if only the schools were made more rational), brought new measures of accountability and control into what had been more laissez-faire relations between teachers and administrators. Teachers came to feel more like functionaries in an engineered system, seldom rewarded for what they regarded as successes, but incessantly reminded of their failures, in a system that came close to demanding that outcomes be equal. The spread of program-planning budgeting systems in the federal government trickled down to state and city school systems, and the attempt to transfer technology brought with it a different view of defining and solving problems.

Increased expectations, a new sense of entitlement among many previously disfranchised groups, and new laws specifying new rights encouraged many people to take legal action or to threaten suit as the first response to any grievance or presumed inequality, rather than seeing the law as a court of last resort. This changed the context within the school and the relations between parents and school officials. New advocacy groups used the courts as never before to press specific interests and mandates upon the school, increasing the responsibilities of school officials while undermining their power and authority. And wherever an inequity was shown, an educational remedy was presumed, sometimes illogically.[11]

At the same time, society insisted that schools perform ever greater custodial functions while sharply limiting the power of adults to discipline students, who were no longer regarded as children but as possessing new equalities vis-à-vis adults. There is now an extraordinary diversity in schools within a more involuntary setting. The schools have become one of the few institutions in our society that have no effective vetoes. They are the universal receptors. Some

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parents are walking out on their children, or turning them out to group homes; prison terms have grown shorter; mental institutions are dumping patients on the street. But the schools must not only house all the young, they must teach them and be held accountable for doing so. There are new pressures to keep these involuntary participants happy: increased curricular choice, expanded children's rights, and weakened margins between adults and children. As teachers have come to be seen as something more like wardens, their status has been lowered.

It is the new adversarial and legalistic character of urban public schools that would be most noticeable to an observer who had not visited a public school since the mid-1960s. Upon entering a Boston public high school, Jay would be handed "The Book," a twenty-five page pamphlet detailing student rights, with less than half a page on student responsibilities. In this pamphlet a student learns that there are five different types of suspensions, the least serious being the short-term one for three days or less. Before even that can be meted out, a student has the right to request an informal hearing with the headmaster and his parents and, if dissatisfied, may appeal to the community superintendent. He (or she) has the right to summon student witnesses to each of these hearings and to have an advocate or lawyer appointed to represent him. Before a student can be expelled, he may exhaust all these steps and, additionally, have a formal hearing with the deputy superintendent and an automatic review and appeal by the superintendent of the schools of the city of Boston. He can be expelled only if he has afflicted serious injury on a student or staff member or has "repeatedly and flagrantly committed a suspendable offense and [whose] continued presence in school would threaten the physical safety of others or the regular running of the school, and all appropriate disciplinary methods short of expulsion have been tried, but have not corrected [the student's] behavior." Similarly, a student cannot be transferred from one class to another in the same school unless officials can prove repeated instances of flagrant misconduct.

Nearly two years of participant observation in an urban high school that is 47 percent black and has diverse ethnic and social class composition has convinced me that the increasingly legalistic character of public education is a shift of profound dimensions. In this school, as in many, order in the halls and to some extent in classrooms is supervised by hall guards or quasi-police or actual police officials. The presence of raw power indicates that authority has been lost. All behavior is regarded as tolerable unless it is specifically declared illegal. There are narrow definitions of jurisdiction. A student who complains to the school principal of being attacked is asked on which side of the street the beating took place. If it happened across the street, it would be out of the school jurisdiction and hence of no concern to the principal. A female teacher was still shaking as she told us about a group of students who had verbally assaulted her and made sexually degrading comments about her in the hall. When we asked why she did not report them, she responded, "Well, it wouldn't have done any good." "Why not?" we pressed. "I didn't have any witnesses," she replied. Adult authority is increasingly defined by what will stand up in court. There are fewer and fewer adults who have the confidence to act on Justice Frankfurter's dictum that "much that is legally permitted is repugnant to the civilized mind." If you have that confidence, and if you have created a good

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community, lawyers can sometimes be useful in settling a conflict, but they cannot make a community for you.

What is also new in the present conflict is that the children themselves have been urged to become advocates and litigants. The increasing number of voices raised on behalf of children's rights has had the effect of giving children nearly equal status with adults. An important turn in the line of legal decisions can be traced to Justice Douglas's dissent in *Yoder*, in which an Amish community refused to send its children to a public high school because they felt it would be destructive of the values they held dear. The Amish freedom to run separate schools was upheld, but Douglas dissented because the children's *own* preferences were not taken into account. "Where the child is mature enough to express potentially conflicting desires, it would be an invasion of the child's rights to permit such an imposition without canvassing his views," said Justice Douglas.[12] Another decision, *Gault*, outlawed discretionary treatment of the young in juvenile courts and stipulated that juveniles must be tried by the same rules of evidence as adults. By essentially declaring that faith in the paternalism of Juvenile Court judges was unjustified,[13] the decision undid the philosophy of the Juvenile Court system established in the late nineteenth century. It was not long before the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups, following the reasoning laid down in Gault, convinced school boards that parents could not trust the paternalism of school principals either. Guidelines such as "The Book" were one result.

The spread of children's rights literature through the secondary schools has been one of the great untold curriculum success stories of the last decade. In a recent bibliography on students' rights and responsibilities, seven new titles were listed, only one of which mentioned responsibilities.[14] A variety of initiatives on behalf of children's rights have dramatically changed the psychological reality in which adults interact with children today. In fact, to put it in those terms is somewhat old-fashioned; the literature almost always refers to "students," "young people," or "persons"—seldom "children." Of course, European visitors noted more than a century ago that American parents fostered their children's independence and that our emphasis on freedom and individualism encouraged them to go their own way at a young age. But if American culture has always, to some degree, encouraged the young to test the idea "Ain't nobody the boss of me," some contemporary adolescents have gone a step further: "Don't touch me or I'll have you arrested." One can hear this new voice in first-person accounts such as from this thirteen-year-old boy:

> "In fifth grade there was this racist mean teacher who refused to let us use the class for black education classes. So we rebelled. We wore stickers to assemblies saying "Fuck Fisher," who was our assistant principal. We sat down in assemblies. We threw chairs out the windows."[15]

The theme of the oppression of youth runs through the literature, as in this excerpt from the Youth Liberation of Ann Arbor:

> We all ended up in another system of absolute authority, with the young people at the bottom. We could only be as free as our parents allowed us to be. They punished us for refusing to obey. And, just like school, the police would come

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> after us if we tried to get away. Our lives are considered the property of various adults. *We do not recognize their right to control us.* We call this control *adult chauvinism*, and we will fight it. We quickly begin to learn that these schools and families are part of a whole system that is sick.[16]

This estrangement is also occurring in a society in which many adults—in school and out—are no longer sure that they know what is right, or if they do, that they have any right to impose it. An excerpt from our field notes illustrates this. Asked what she does by one of our field workers, a full-time high-school drug counselor replied:

> "Well, let me explain to you that I don't report to the school administration at all. I am directly linked up with a different agency outside the school itself. If anybody in school is considered to be either high or a habitual drug abuser, then they are referred to me, and I try to set up a counseling session with them, but the school itself does not handle drug cases."

When asked if she directly approached students in the school that she knew to be drug users, she replied:

> "Let's face it. It's not a problem if there is no effect on the kid's performance. I mean, who are we to say what's right or wrong? A kid could always turn around and say to you, "How many of the faculty have an alcohol problem or a drinking problem?" and yet their job goes on, they continue to teach—they can point that out to you. So who are we to say what's right or wrong?"

Here is the collapse of adult authority as representing a standard for children. Not only did she express no moral authority, she actively concurs in the notion that adults in general deserve none because *some* adults have a drinking problem. The quotation also illustrates the earlier point about the increasing division of labor in the school: "Let me explain to you that I don't report to the school administration at all." The administration is not personalized as the principal, but is faceless "school administration." She feels no loyalty, no obligation to a community standard. Her "explanation" is really a declaration of independence.

Pressed about her personal attitude toward drugs, the counselor took no stand, saying that if she said she approved of drug use, the administration would fire her. On the other hand, she did not think she would be believable to the kids if she said she did not use drugs. Hence, the model that she presents to students is that of a neutral facilitator of the conversation. It is up to the kids to decide. She also exhibits a technicist's mentality when she says, "Let's face it! It's not a problem if there's no effect on the kid's performance." It is only the technical performance, the score, the end product that matters; her view implicitly, if not explicitly, rules out questions of character, of responsible and desirable conduct.

If Jay left such a school for Andover, he would leave a school that implicitly teaches students to think, "How can I manipulate this rule system to maximize

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my self-interest?" to enter a community that would teach him to ask, "What is expected of me, and what do I owe to others?" Contrast the legalisms from "The Book" excerpted above with this statement from the Andover catalogue:

> In a community such as Andover, all must commit themselves to the goals of the community and to loyalty to each other. Since education at Phillips Academy is both intellectual and humane, the students and faculty derive mutual support from sharing of themselves and their ideals. . . . Yet the happiness of everyone in the community depends on consideration and awareness, restraint and candor, discretion and shared joy. Collaboration toward these imprecise but worthwhile ends is an expectation which all in the academy hold.[17]

It would be hopelessly romantic to assume that all private schools are like Phillips Academy. The fastest growing sector of private education consists of fundamentalist and all-white academies, some of which have less noble ideals.[18] Nor do schools like Phillips Academy serve only the ends listed in their catalogues. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that private education owes its character solely to wealth and snob appeal. We included a school like Andover in our study, but we also spent a year in an inner-city Catholic school whose enrollment was two-thirds black (most of whom were Protestant) and that served many welfare families at a per pupil expenditure less than half that spent by the public schools in the same city. What struck us most powerfully even in our small sample (we visited thirty-three schools and spent a year of intensive field work in five) was that the differences between the privates and the publics were in some ways as great or greater than the social class differences between the schools.

The private schools have two kinds of freedoms that are not present in the same way in the public schools. The first of these might be called "freedom from." The private school is not encumbered by that thick external layer of constraints and policies that has contributed to the technicist and adversarial culture in many public schools. In fact, it was by virtue of carrying out our work simultaneously in public and private settings that we came to understand how those constraints operate in the public school. The second freedom might be called voluntarism, or "freedom for." That is, private school parents are not just fleeing public schools or engaged in white flight, although some are. Most seek the ethos or tradition that the particular school represents. That tradition is usually a way of talking about character, and represents some agreement about which virtues are most worth having. A primary function of private schools is to make visible an otherwise invisible collectivity, to draw together a public that shares similar preferences. The private school is both a symbolic and an actual representation of valued moral and intellectual goods. The fundamental role of leadership in a private school is to bring persons into communication about ways of inculcating and sustaining those values. The leaders of such schools are chosen because they exemplify those values; they are "the best of us," persons capable of symbolizing the tradition and of drawing others into it. Leaders are supposed to have the wisdom to choose teachers who represent the tradition. They must be able to evoke shared commitments and to lead others in fuller realization of the valued goods of the community. The quality and character of the teachers are believed to make a great difference. The community stretches

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through time and measures individuals against perduring standards. Traditions are a way of pointing to those standards and sensing their weight. The parents choose to enroll their children in that community, but children do not so much choose the tradition as they are enveloped by it.

Although any discussion of ideal types of the public and private in an essay of this length must inevitably oversimplify, the problem of leadership in the public setting is quite different. The leader is not selected as an instantiation of particular virtues but for competence in interpersonal skills, fairness in enforcing rules, and strength to withstand conflict. Skilled negotiators and coordinators are sought for leadership positions, and they choose others on the basis of their competence in performing a specialist's role. Whereas the head of a private school is largely a symbolic communicator with the external public (in fact, must continually re-create and sustain that public), the public school principal must be a skilled advocate within a bureaucracy. The principal in a public setting can be a mere satisfier, presiding over the rule system, the guardian of process with no vision of desired outcomes. Personal charisma earns some an extra measure of authority that enables them to create a semblance of community within a bureaucratic system. But the relentless temptation in an environment of competing and often aggrieved interest groups is to abandon any effort to achieve transcendent ideals by which all could be bound and to fall back into the role of a passive agent of process.

Of course, my account of urban public schools has emphasized some of the unintended negative consequences of policies that, from another perspective, can be seen as achievements; to some degree, our problems are a function of our successes. We have laid a tremendous burden on the American schools: namely, to be the principal avenue of creating a more equal and just society. We have attempted to right some great wrongs and have carried out a social revolution in the schools. We have abolished geographical notions of community; we have brought black and white and Chicano, and children in wheelchairs, into the classrooms. We have had to hire more specialists to minister to them and more lawyers to argue on their behalf. As Richard Sennett would put it, we have introduced "purposive disorder" into the schools. Sennett argues that chaos may not be an inevitable outcome of giving people a chance to "democratically deform" preexisting controls and structure of authority.[19] We can hope that the new polity we are now constructing will lead to a new and more just order.

But close observation of the world created by our good intentions troubles me. It is possible that what my colleagues and I have seen in a few schools is unrepresentative of most. I have drawn a grim portrait, not to declare our experiments a hopeless failure, but to provide a vision of the task that confronts us. I have suggested the direction in which the modern American public high school is tending. It threatens to become a container for adolescents who receive the ministrations of a greatly enlarged core of specialists in a setting in which presumed equals argue about their rights, and individuals pursue their moral preferences in whatever direction they please, so long as they do not break the law. The only test the larger society applies to such a collectivity is the test of efficiency: Is the school effective in producing increases in cognitive functioning as measured by standardized tests? We have too frequently reduced talk about good schools to talk about effectiveness. We no longer seem to recall Aristotle's

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language of intellectual and moral virtues;[20] we speak only of a reductionist version of intellectual virtue, as reflected in standardized test scores.

My indictment must strike some ears as a reactionary lament. Was not the nation founded on the enlightenment values of equality, liberty, and the individual pursuit of happiness? Have I not simply described the broad shift from particularistic and often inequitable forms of traditional authority to typically modern and more universalistic forms of legal-rational authority? How could we expect so central an institution as schooling to be exempt from such a general historical development?

That question directs our attention to the way in which American schools have combined aspects of traditional and legal-rational forms of authority. They have been traditional, or community-based, in that they were, for most of our history, locally financed and neighborhood-based. As schools have become more centralized and urban, and as both financing and school policy have shifted to state and federal levels, legal-rational, or bureaucratic, forms of authority have been superimposed on traditional forms of local governance.

Yet I feel uneasy about the exercise of legal-rational authority in its pure form in schools, because it presumes we are dealing with adults who are pursuing their preferences in a system of legal rules. It presumes also that the individual already has been educated and has some notion of what it means to be a decent human being, of how one should act toward another *beyond* what is prescribed or proscribed by law. In the process of receiving an education we are not merely absorbing facts and learning skills, but we are as well being inducted into some set of standards, beliefs, and values about what it means to be a human being. Schools, even in democratic and pluralist societies, have had the responsibility for teaching what R. S. Peters calls a provisional morality.[21] By provisional, Peters means that teachers initiate children into such beliefs in a nonbehavioristic way, not stamping or "fixing" a particular moral content for life, but teaching in such a way that the children recognize that as adults they will have the responsibility and freedom to reevaluate those beliefs. The crisis of authority in the American school is that in many places we no longer have any agreement on what that provisional morality ought to be, or we feel that any attempt to provide it is a form of indoctrination. Hence, we have moved closer to the pure model of legal-rational authority, prematurely declaring—even insisting—that children are adults capable of choosing their own morality as long as they do not commit crimes. In some communities, particularly in rural areas, enough agreement about what that provisional morality is still exists, so that teachers and public school staff can operate on a basis of informal trust within a legal-rational system. Where that trust does not exist, I think we are headed for ever greater stress, instability, and perhaps the eventual abandonment of the public schools.

A system of bureaucratic, or legal-rational, authority operates on principles of selection by expertise, subsumed under rules that maximize efficiency and administered with formalistic impersonality. It can work in a factory, where workers sell their labor by contract to make a product by the most efficient means under agreed-upon rules, and where neither emotional commitment nor any agreement on the goodness or worthwhileness of what is produced is required. But education by its very nature must occur in a community, must

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draw on emotional commitments, engender sympathy for others, and produce something in us that we feel has great value. Once children are brought together to share a common life, we have an inescapable responsibility to develop their moral as well as intellectual virtues. We are paying great costs because we increasingly operate our public schools as though they were factories for learning in which the only value is increased cognitive output. Three responses to this situation are likely:

1. To withdraw children from public schools and place them in private schools, which are communities chosen by those who share a provisional morality.
2. To seek some new basis of establishing a provisional morality within the public schools, which raises the question of how we regenerate a dialogue about moral education in an increasingly technicist society.
3. To push the legal-rational model to its individualistic limits, which would require that we dismantle the public school system as we know it. Instead of education in a school community, we would establish a contract-learning system in which children or their parents would be free to sign up at any computer terminal that was available, so to speak. Learning would operate solely by individual contract, much as it does now for adults who may take a course in macrame or accounting in their spare time. Private firms would be licensed by the government as reading and mathematics instruction centers for young children. When they can read, they choose courses themselves. State educational agencies would be restricted largely to testing and credentialing functions.

The first option is currently enjoying a considerable vogue. Vouchers or tax credits may enable more parents to send their children to schools that represent a community of value. In some cases they may be motivated by racist or elitist values, just as such motives often influenced parents to move to exclusive suburbs to enroll their children in public schools there. That risk would be worth taking if voucher plans widened choice for parents of the neediest children. Vouchers are no panacea, however, and advocates are likely to overestimate the number of new schools that would be formed. Good schools are good communities, and these are not instantaneous creations that can be thrown up like a chain of "7-11" stores. The private schools themselves are divided on the question, with opponents of voucher plans arguing that tax support would inevitably bring unwelcome governmental controls.

We cannot avoid the responsibility for facing up to the second option, which requires a fundamental rethinking of the nature and purpose of public education. We cannot return to a golden age that never was, nor can we put McGuffey's Readers back on the shelves. But we need to reinvent a modern equivalent for the McGuffey's Reader, a provisional morality that expresses some of the common beliefs of a democratic pluralist society[22]—which means that, although we respect differences of opinions on many issues, there are some salient or core beliefs to which all subscribe. Pluralism is in fact not possible

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without agreement on some kinds of values: the minimal order required for dialogue, the willingness to listen to one another, respect for truth, the rejection of racism (or openness to participation in the dialogue), as well as those transcendent values that shore up the whole society—a sense of altruism and service to others and respect for personal effort and hard work.[23] Without such agreement, one does not have a public, but a kind of radical, relativism; not pluralism but mere coexistence.

Those who favor the third option, or what I have called a contract-learning system in the legal-rational mode, believe that such coexistence is all we can legitimately hope for. Enthusiastic advocates for such a system abound. Apart from the prescription of law, they believe all moralities are private. They see no need for a common school nor for any public forum for the discussion of virtue. But in such a world, even assuming a perfect system of law, where do we develop a sense of discretion about when or whether to sue? For no legal system can stand if all are litigants much of the time. Where do we develop a sense of sympathy? For even when we are right, we should not always press for damages. Where do we develop a sense of integrity? For we can be within the technical limits of the law but without a shred of virtue. Where do we develop a sense of community that sustains us midst the mess and slippage, the horrible contingencies of this life,[24] against which the law offers little refuge?

References

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[1]See Harriet Wilson, "Parents Can Cut the Crime Rate," *New Society*, December 4, 1980; and Richard Barth, "Home-Based Reinforcement of School Behavior," *Review of Educational Research* 49(3) (Summer 1979).

[2]James S. Coleman et al., *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966).

[3]However, in his latest work, which is forthcoming, Coleman emphasizes the role of discipline and homework policies in producing distinctive outcomes for pupils of similar background. See James S. Coleman, Thomas Hoffer, and Sally Kilgore, "High School and Beyond: A National Longitudinal Study for the 1980s, Public and Private Schools," a report to the National Center for Education Statistics (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, March, 1981).

[4]Michael Rutter, Barbara Maughan, Peter Mortimore, and Janet Ouston, *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[5]Coleman et al., "High School and Beyond."

[6]Karl E. Weick, "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21 (March 1976): 3.

[7]Dan C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 168-75.

[8]Philip A. Cusick, "A Study of Networks among Professional Staffs in Secondary Schools," presented at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting, Boston (April 1980).

[9]Yves Simon, *Nature and Functions of Authority* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1948), p. 6.

[10]Many of the new advocates who shape school policies are neither elected nor accountable to anyone who is, which David Cohen argues is one of the central paradoxes in school governance. See his "Reforming School Politics," *Harvard Educational Review* 48(4) (November 1978).

[11]For a discussion of inappropriate and illogical legal mandates, see Arthur Wise, *Legislated Learning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

[12]Wisconsin v. Yoder, 406 U.S. 205, p. 242.

[13]In re Gault, 387 U.S. 1, 13.

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[14]See the bibliography compiled by Susan E. Davison, "Curriculum Materials and Resources for Law-Related Education," in *Social Education*, March 1977, reprinted in the National School Resource Network's "Core Curriculum in Preventing and Reducing School Violence and Vandalism: Course 3, School Climate" (Washington, D.C: Center for Human Service, January, 1980).

[15]Youth Liberation of Ann Arbor, "We Do Not Recognize Their Right to Control Us," in *The Children's Rights Movement: Overcoming the Oppression of Young People*, Beatrice Gross and Ronald Gross (eds.) (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977), p. 126. In the introduction to the volume, the authors write: "A good case can be made for the fact that young people are the most oppressed of all minorities. They are discriminated against on the basis of age in everything from movie admissions to sex. They are traditionally the subjects of ridicule, humiliation, and mental torture by adults. Their civil rights are routinely violated in homes, schools, and other institutions" p. 1.

[16]Ibid., p. 128. Emphasis in the original.

[17]An eloquent statement of goals adopted by the faculty of Phillips Academy is reprinted in the 1979-80 *Catalog*. The faculty seek to provide "a rigorous academic education" and speak at great length about other virtues as well: "physical agility, endurance and resilience . . . notions of fair play and sportsmanship . . . encouraging the study and exercise of religious beliefs, . . . responsibility, resourcefulness and social concern" p. 12.

[18]An essay of this length cannot do justice to the variety of private schools in America, which include Jewish, Lutheran, and Catholic parochial schools, as well as the expanding fundamentalist schools, which vary greatly among themselves. Only a few of these are consciously racist, and many manage to combine a rigorous education with fundamentalist religious beliefs.

[19]Richard Sennett, *Authority* (New York: Knopf, 1980), p. 190.

[20]For one of Aristotle's richest passages, and his plea that education must be public and not private—"since the whole city has one end, it is manifest that education should be one and the same for all"—see his *Politics*, Book VIII, chapter 2, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Richard McKeon (ed.) (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 1305-06.

[21]Richard S. Peters, *Authority, Responsibility and Education* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973), pp. 140-56.

[22]I am indebted to my colleague John Briggs for discussions of the complexities of issues of pluralism and public education, and for pointing me to the work of John Higham, particularly his essay, "Integration vs. Pluralism: Another American Dilemma," in *The Center Magazine*, July/August 1971, pp. 67-73.

[23]Surveys reveal a significant erosion of these core values in American society. For example, parents appear to be less altruistic, with 66 percent feeling that "they should be free to live their own lives even if it means spending less time with their children," and 63 percent say they have the right to live well now "even if it means leaving less to the children." And only a minority (43 percent) now believe "hard work always pays off," whereas 58 percent endorsed that view in 1969. However, 57 percent agree it is best to "demand a lot" from children and presumably believe the schools should teach students that they have to "do their best to get ahead." Daniel Yankelovich, "New Rules in American Life," *Psychology Today* 15(4) (April 1981): 35-91. One could argue that it is impossible for the schools to transmit what the adults no longer believe. But it is also possible that a ten-year shift in opinion about the value of hard work will not become a permanent change in values unless we act as if it is inevitable. The consensus we attempt to achieve in public schools will have much to do with the outcome.

[24]We cannot—nor should we—attempt to remove every possible stress in the maturation process. Nor would I assert that a good school must be conflict-free. Conflict is inevitable in life, and particularly in adolescence. It matters in what context it occurs and what the response is on the part of adults. Although I have emphasized the responsibility of adults for the character of schools, I do not see socialization as the primary goal of schooling. Rather, I believe we have gone too far toward the "cognitive output" model in efforts to correct an earlier exaggerated emphasis on "life adjustment" and personality skills. We need both mind and character. Schools can be neither morally neutral producers of cognitive skill nor witless producers of virtue. For a good discussion of the socialization debate, see Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), especially pp. 234-39.

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JEROME KAGAN

The Moral Function of the School

IN THE MONTHS JUST BEFORE THE SECOND BIRTHDAY, children inform their parents for the first time that they know some events are more valued than others. They point to a tear in a curtain and communicate through vocal timbre, facial expression, or by simply uttering "Broke" their recognition that an event is a candidate for disapproval. Two-year-olds are also apprehensive when they feel an obligation to perform an action they have not yet perfected, but smile privately when they complete a self-generated plan. In these and related behaviors, children tell us they have begun to appreciate the contrasting meanings of right and wrong, good and bad. And from this time forward judgment colors human activity. People work for good outcomes, seek alliances with good people, and attempt continually to reassure themselves of their virtue. By virtue, I do not mean a specific set of properties, but only those the person has come to regard as worthy. One wonders, *How good am I?* long before asking the identity question, *Who am I?*

I regard as axiomatic the assumption that each person must be able to reassure the self of its basic goodness. Locke nominated virtue, wisdom, breeding, and learning as the qualities every father desired for his son, but added, "I place virtue as the first and most necessary of those endowments . . . as absolutely requisite to make him valued and beloved by others, acceptable or tolerable to himself. Without that I think he will be happy neither in this nor in the other world."[1]

The schools are an essential instrument in each person's crusade to accumulate a personal sense of virtue, for they permit children to acquire some of the local signs that define personal worth, most of which change their surface meaning with time and culture. A contemporary example of this impermanence is contained in the changing moral status of homosexuality, divorce, and abortion. Over the past half century each has passed from the devalued, dark end of the value gradient to a much less certain position. Of more direct relevance to this essay are changes in the criteria for a child's worth that occurred during the first two decades of this century. The two most essential components of the new catechism held that adjustment to local social demands was to replace self-control as the index of maturity: that is, feeling successful was to take precedence over feeling moral. The new directive also required yielding to, rather than inhibition of, desire, and a more competitive, less

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sympathetic attitude toward others. The combination of moral relativism and instrumental narcissism made the schools agencies of selection, and elevated anxiety to a position of prominence in the mood hierarchy of youth and young adults.

The Nineteenth Century View

Nineteenth century observers of children were certain they knew what was morally proper for all citizens, and believed morality was inevitable once the psychological organ of *will* emerged in the second year and the child learned the ethical status of particular behaviors. A sense of right and wrong was a universal event in ontogeny, not an accidental product of learning, because the child was prepared by nature to infer the actions that adults disavowed, to sympathize with the distress of others, and to duplicate the behaviors he was exposed to. James Sully, the author of a very popular nineteenth century book on the development of children, wrote:

> The facts here briefly illustrated seem to me to show that there is in the child from the first a rudiment of true law abidingness. . . . The day when the child first becomes capable of this putting himself into his mother's place and realizing, if only for an instant, the trouble he has brought on her, is an all-important one in his moral development.[2]

All children must, because they are human, realize that causing hurt to another is immoral; such knowledge can never be lost, regardless of any subsequent cruelty the child may have experienced. The child does not have to learn that hurting others is bad; that insight accompanies growth.

The premise of an innate foundation to morality was, of course, in accord with the Darwinian view that animals with strong social instincts would be susceptible to an appreciation of right and wrong as soon as their "intellectual powers had become as well developed, or nearly as well developed, as in man."[3] But it was necessary to have an instrument to transform the competence contained in the appreciation of right and wrong into the capacity for proper behavior. Will played that role for the nineteenth century theorists. According to William Preyer, "All muscular movements of man may, in fact, be distinguished as willed and not willed, voluntary and involuntary. . . . The development of will . . . and the development of non-willing . . . in the inhibition of frequently repeated movements furnishes the foundation for the formation of character."[4]

Will is active, deliberate, and selective, and assumes an executive with the freedom to choose among alternatives. Will was a conjunctive concept, for it represented the union of a mental representation of a goal with the behavior necessary to attain it. Will was so central to late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers, that it was occasionally given a place in the explanatory equation equal to, and independent of, both heredity and environment. The author of one popular text on child psychology implied that will was a special organ every child possessed to so sufficient a degree, that it could be used to oppose or enhance the influence of his biology and his family.[5]

Thus through the first decade of this century, the child's character was conceptualized in an absolutist frame. The disposition to adopt a uniform set of

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proper actions was rooted in biology and universal experiences, and orchestrated by an autonomous will. But, surprisingly, by 1920 all of this had changed. Pragmatism, moral relativism, and conditioning theory had created a profound alteration in the explanation of a child's ethical stance. The new theorists emphasized interactive experience within the family, replaced free will with unconscious motives, and became preoccupied with individual differences in the child's adjustment.

The Role of Interactive Social Experience

While the nineteenth century observer of children was not very curious about differences in children's rates of progress toward maturity or the possibility that several adult profiles were possible, these were precisely the puzzles more modern observers pondered. And these modern writers were persuaded that interactive social experience, especially experience in the home, was the central basis for the development of these qualities as well as their extraordinary variation. One author captured the majority belief in quintessential form: "Each individual personality is to a large degree a reflection of the personalities with whom he has interaction. . . . His personality grows as he shares life with others and they with him."[6]

A corollary of the emphasis on direct parent-child interaction was a greater receptivity to conscious intervention in the life of the child. The blunt statements of John Watson, combined with the warnings implicit in Freud's writings, led psychologists to urge self-conscious control and manipulation of the child, not only to tame disobedience and aggression (which nineteenth century parents always did), but also to sculpt a keener intelligence, earlier autonomy, and a belief in one's value. Essays of advice in magazines intended for well-educated audiences implied that raising children was a technical skill requiring special training. In sharing his wisdom with the public, Bertrand Russell affirmed Watson's belief that infancy was of paramount importance, but like most counselors, projected his personal desires onto the child: "A child needs to grow like a tree quietly in one spot at his own pace and in his own manner."[7]

John Watson was perhaps the most vocal proponent of the view that all habits, including moral ones, were socially conditioned outcomes. "We can build any man, starting at birth, into any kind of social or a-social being upon order. . . . The home (mother, father, brother, sister relations) is responsible for what the child becomes. Nurture—not nature—is responsible."[8]

The popularity of these assumptions grew so quickly, that a few decades later the eminent anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer was able to state, unabashedly, that a unified theory of social science rested on twelve postulates, three of which stated that human behavior was predominantly learned through interaction with other members of the society.[9] The celebration of social experience extended to encounters with children, and thus concern with the influence of peer groups and the child's ability to adjust to them, topics missing from most nineteenth century essays, became salient in modern texts. Some educators argued that the child's "chief need in life is harmonious adjustment to the people among whom one lives"; hence the chief "purpose of the school in America is to make the individual social."[10]

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The doctrine, explicit in most writings, was that social events were both the major incentives for change and the bases of habit preservation. This position contrasts with the nineteenth century view of a more isolated child growing according to a natural plan. At times it seems as if the objects of analysis were two different species—the nineteenth century observers were describing bears; the twentieth century scientists, bees.

The emphasis on interactive experience as the source of basic cognitive and behavioral characteristics and their variation affected theory dealing with the establishment of values. Textbooks in child psychology written just prior to World War I began to modulate the earlier emphasis on the maturation of a moral sense, and awarded greater potency, but not yet total power, to specific experiences with adults. Gabriel Compayré, rector of the University of Lyons and author of a two-volume treatise on the young child, argued that, although imitation, an inherited disposition, was the basis of socialization of values, the adults the child was exposed to were relevant because they determined what responses the child would acquire. Compayré rejected the assumption of an innate moral sense, asserting instead that morality was acquired gradually, with pleasure and pain as the necessary catalysts.

> This is why it is not an anachronism to think from the cradle of the responsibility, the moral obligations, that will one day rest on the head of the little child, smiling now in his unconscious innocence, his ideas and his feeling only the reflections of those of his parents; just as his left cheek or his right cheek, when he has finished nursing, like one side of a peach gilded by the sun, remains very red for several minutes, warmed as it is by the touch of the mother's breast.[11]

Following the dissemination of Pavlovian theory at the end of the First World War, the child's morality became just another habit that might not appear if conditions were not arranged properly. "Unless a good many habit systems are gradually built into a child's conduct he cannot be expected to operate with any large degree of judgment and freedom. . . . Moral behavior . . . is not an innate tendency, . . . it is a by-product of social living."[12]

By the middle of the third decade the doctrine of moral relativism was so firmly entrenched in the schools, that articles in the *Journal of the National Education Association* legitimized the confusion teachers felt over the character traits they were supposed to encourage. In an essay by C. C. Cooper, typical of this period, one teacher asked, "How can a teacher know what habits should be formed by children? How can she know the relative importance of these habits? How can she know whether progress is being made in the development of these habits?"[13] Cooper advised teachers to consult inventories of character traits written by experts, as though pedagogical guidance in this domain could be obtained with the same strategy used in geography and history.

By World War II there was no waffling on the theme of moral relativism. The best child was the one who had been trained to meet the local environmental demands of achieving educational, vocational, and social success, and above all, freedom to actualize his special set of motives and talents. The assumption of a core set of uniform moral directives that every child was disposed to practice had become hopelessly obsolete, because all moral standards and the

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disposition to act morally were acquired through the application of reward and punishment. Articles in magazines like *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and *Good Housekeeping* urged parents to use praise and punishment self-consciously in the service of inculcating proper habits.[14] Contrast this engineering of ethics with the advice of nineteenth century authors who simply told parents and teachers to be proper role models, and socialization would take care of itself.

The new concern with self-conscious application of reward and punishment was accompanied by the replacement of will with motive. The private executive had been exiled, and the child had become a collection of habits and motives, "an organism which responds unthinkingly in more or less stereotyped ways to the main features of the environment."[15]

Piaget was an important figure in this story because he compromised the occult connotations of will with the language of conditioning promoted by John Watson. The problem that faced any careful observer of infants was to explain intentional behavior. The one-year-old child imitating his parent or selecting one toy from three attractive alternatives seemed to be behaving in a goal-directed way. The nineteenth century theorist explained these data by calling on the unobservable processes of will. The behaviorists strained credibility by suggesting that imitation, foresight, and a planful attitude toward problems were conditioned. Piaget struck an attractive middle course by denying both will and conditioning, and positing instead stages of sensory-motor schemes—an idea that preserved mechanism and connectivity by permitting intention to grow out of the repeated practice of reflexes. The generality of this description made it possible for many readers to accept this account, or at least made it difficult for them to reject it.[16]

It is informative to note how pretransition and posttransition authors differed in their interpretations of the same behavior. Both William Stern and Robert White noted that during the second year the child sets himself tasks to master. Stern interpreted this behavior as an index of will: "One of the earliest signs of awakened spontaneity in will is to be seen in the fact that the child of sixteen months will set himself little tasks which he tries to accomplish."[17] Robert White classified the same phenomenon as a sign of a special motive to be effective. The difference in connotation is important, for will connotes spontaneity and freedom of choice. White's construct generates the picture of a child impelled by a need to be instrumentally potent—the child cannot help but build block towers.[18] Motive as an explanation for action accorded well with the commitment to physical determinism among post-World War I psychologists who believed the child did not possess an autonomous will capable of deciding what actions to initiate. The twentieth century child was not in complete control of his behavior, because past experience had etched, deep in his unconscious, moral directions he could not ignore. This modern view removed some responsibility from the agent for the commission of immoral acts. This is not an idle controversy.

In a volume of essays entitled *Determinism and Freedom*, H. L. A. Hart asserted that one of the basic suppositions in American law was that moral culpability, not the criminal act, was the basis of responsibility in a crime, and

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therefore must be the determinant of punishment.[19] Margaret Curti's popular text, *Child Psychology*, published in 1932, contained a plainer assertion of this principle:

> In the first place, we may assure ourselves that the investigators are on sound ground in assuming that there are, for every delinquent act, antecedent conditions adequate to produce that result. The old doctrines of free choice, of an innate moral sense, of chance, and of divine intervention have no place in a scientific inquiry into conduct. We must operate on the fundamental assumption of science that every event has a cause, which in psychology may be taken to mean that every act of a human being is a natural response to an adequate stimulating situation.[20]

Although recent authors are not so blunt in challenging the responsibility of the adolescent delinquent, modern textbooks contain that message in subtle form. In 1979 Hetherington and Parke asserted the popular view that parental actions, such as physical punishment, predispose a child to aggressive behavior. Television was also indicted as a possible cause of crime. "Exposure to TV violence can breed indifference to [a] certain individual's plight. . . . The inability of young children to make links between action and outcomes in regular TV programming may contribute to the heightened effect of TV on young viewers."[21] Thus a young child is not basically moral or immoral, but can become one or the other as a result of factors over which he has no control.

The philosopher Thomas Nagel recently affirmed the modern view, suggesting that most significant actions, whether successful or not, "nearly always depend to some extent on factors beyond our control. . . . Ultimately, nothing or almost nothing . . . which a person does seems to be under his control."[22] This position, Nagel argues, undermines moral evaluations. It is directly opposed to Kant's insistence that each person is responsible, through will, for morally correct actions. Although some may find it unusually difficult to make the correct choice, it is a possibility for everyone. Because this is a metaphysical, rather than an empirical, issue, the contemporary briefs for determined moral decisions must reflect the sentiment of a significant proportion of the population.

Although a child's predispositions are established through events over which he has no control, most authors are more evasive than Curti or Nagel, and try to avoid asking if the person is morally responsible for those behaviors. Most Western intellectuals would like to believe that there is a tiny slit in the heavy blanket of determinism through which sunlight pokes, permitting each person to have a private conscience that does not reside completely in the group and past experience. After asserting in the first part of his essay *Determinism and Freedom* that "all our behavior is determined," George Wald admits, "I think that we have freedom of will and that it comes out of our uniqueness as individuals, perhaps wholly determined, yet to some degree unpredictable."[23]

Why, when it is such a phenomenologically compelling experience, is there such tenderness surrounding the idea of free will? The nineteenth century promise of certainty in prediction of physical phenomena tempted many to abandon the compelling intuition of free will. Both psychoanalytic and behavioral theory supported the determinacy axiom, and the usual interpretations of psychological data added that certain events could predispose children to act

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immorally or incompetently. Parental punishment, insufficient love, foster homes, television, movies, peers, and poverty were all regarded as potentially productive of immoral behavior. And if those events were insufficient, some claimed that genes also made a partial contribution to selected outcomes. Some essayists wrote as if they sensed that their audience wanted to believe that children were helpless victims of events they could not prevent, rather than agents responsible for acts of aggression or deceit. Modern texts in child psychology describe the child as if he were a Gulliver made impotent by hundreds of thin circumstantial chains he cannot sever.

But remnants of the older view persist, leading to a subtle inconsistency in our sense of how much control each person has over his moral decisions and acts. Like most nineteenth century observers, contemporary theorists wish to award major control to the self rather than to society, while remaining loyal to determinism. American parents tell their children not to conform consistently to the wishes of the peer group, but to decide what they believe and to act in accord with what they regard as proper. By contrast, Japanese parents continually remind their children to avoid behavior that would provoke anger and disapproval from others. The Japanese view places the individual and society in a more complementary relationship. The individual gains his goals through, and with the help of, the group, avoiding alienation from others.

> What would be strictly a private matter in an individualistic society tends to be a group enterprise in Japan. . . . Collective cooperation is taken so much for granted that a Japanese may not become aware of it until he is displaced from his group. . . . The Japanese concern for belonging relates to the tendency towards collectivism, which is expressed by an individual's identification with the collective goal of the group to which he belongs. Collectivism thus involves cooperation and solidarity, and the sentimental desire for the warm feeling of *ittaikan* (feeling of oneness) with fellow members of one's group is shared by Japanese.[24]

The modern Western observer tries to find an accommodation between a determinism implied by conditioning, a connected history, and unconscious motives, on the one hand, and the need to award each person a free, personal conscience, on the other, because group control of morality is impossible in a pluralistic society.

The Bases for Change

Of the many events during the second and third decades of this century that influenced the preoccupation with individual differences in habits and values acquired through interactive experience, three seem of special significance—an increase in ethnic tension, which threatened the egalitarian ethos; the self-consciousness of psychologists regarding the scientific status of their field; and the wide dissemination of conditioning theory.

There was a serious increase in racial and ethnic tension between the new European immigrants and the Caucasian majority during the years before World War I. Both H. Cravens[25] and H. May have documented that the flood of European immigrants into the cities increased suspicion and hostility between the middle-class native whites and the alien minority groups and led to legislation that restricted immigration. This strife was especially strong during

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the middle of the second decade, in part because the depression of 1914 revived labor's fear of foreign competition, and "every time anybody for any reason worried about the preservation of old ways, he was likely to glance with alarm at the annual inflow of half a million newcomers."[26]

One highly publicized assumption was that the differences in the ability, character, and vulnerability to deviance between native and immigrant groups were essentially biological in origin. Concern with proliferation of the less advantaged group, which would weaken the capacity of the larger society, led to a national conference on race betterment in 1914. One year later twelve states had passed sterilization laws. The belief that the ethnic and racial differences in habits, styles of interaction, and especially mental ability were genetic was strengthened when the mental tests administered to recruits as America entered the war revealed that ethnic minorities and blacks had the lowest scores. The interpretation suggested by Robert Yerkes and Lewis Terman, two of the most influential psychologists of the time, was that these differences were likely to be based, in part, on genetic factors.

Sixty-five years later American government officials are again worried about the very low intelligence test scores of army recruits from minority groups, this time black and Hispanic. But history has altered the social consensus on the meaning of these scores. In 1980 the secretary of the army could do what his counterpart in 1915 could not: challenge the test, remove the scores from the recruits' files, and insist that, despite the low scores, the recruits were as capable as their civilian peers.[27]

Because the IQ scores of the European immigrants were regarded as an index of biological qualities, educated Americans holding liberal political views were forced to confront an idea that was threatening to an egalitarian ethos. I suggest that a majority of these liberal Americans wanted to believe in the ideal of a society in which the poor and disadvantaged could, through effort and education, lift themselves to the middle class. That some geneticists and social scientists writing during the first two decades of this century—including James McKeen Cattell, William Bagby, John Watson, Franz Boas, and the biologists Hermann Muller and J. B. S. Haldane—explicitly rejected the conclusion of Terman, Yerkes, Galton, and Pearson supports this hypothesis. Henry May affirms the validity of my assumption: "The first and the central article of faith in the national credo was, as it always had been, the reality, certainty and eternity of moral values. . . . In this moral scheme evil was easy to define. It was incarnate in extreme inequality, political corruption and ruthless power."[28]

May suggested that many Americans would have been bothered—as Adam Smith and Helvétius would have been two centuries earlier—by any fact that threatened the idea that "by hard work most of the newcomers could probably be led toward the light."[29] Thus educated Americans with a liberal bias would be eager for any weapon to neutralize the hypothesis of racial inferiority. Essays in the *Atlantic Monthly* during the second decade reflected this premise. One author asserted his faith in the basic genetic similarity of all humans. "While human nature is ever the same the growth and influence of civilization produces from this same nature ever changing results. What marks us off from our ancestors is a changed environment and not a changed human nature."[30] The objective mental test scores posed a potentially serious inconsistency in national

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philosophy. If poor Italians, Slavs, and Jews were biologically less talented than native Caucasians, individual effort and proper education might not work. It is not surprising that educated liberals would have been eager for any rational weapon that would neutralize the racial inferiority hypothesis.

Additionally, psychologists trained after 1900 were writing at a time when psychology was trying to define itself as an experimental natural science, distinct from philosophy and biology, empirical in character, and pruned of metaphysics. The critique of racial inferiority had to be rational and based on scientific evidence. Pavlov's work, made popular by John Watson, was seized on by the new cadre of young psychologists. Conditioning was elegant experimental science and distinctly psychological in subject matter and language of description. Additionally, conditioning theory emphasized the role of experience rather than biology in promoting both change and stability of psychological characteristics. By the late 1920s learning had become the key mechanism in all discussions of child development, and with that change came longer discussions of the influence of experience.

One of the significant consequences of the acceptance of a behavioristic frame was a singleminded cathexis of external rewards that satisfied hedonistic needs. This premise made it easy to explain the desire for external goals like recognition and wealth, and difficult to account for the self-conscious renunciation of these states. The latter phenomenon required positing a psychic process whose construction fell outside the sphere of conditioning principles; hence, it had to go.

The Modern Source of Unease

The celebration of moral relativism after 1900 helped to change the criteria for action and the qualities that define virtue. Of central importance in the affirmation of virtue is whether the power of reassurance lies mainly within the person or in the environment. I believe that one of the criteria an individual uses to evaluate his or her goodness has changed over the last two centuries. A Puritan found it much easier than a modern American to reassure self of its virtue by actions of restraint and inhibition of desire. These acts were totally within the sphere of ego's control and therefore did not require help from others or chance. Consider the difference in definition of virtue between the Puritans and today's middle-class adults. The former followed Locke's declaration that self-denial was the central characteristic of virtue: "And the great principle and foundation of all virtue and worth is plac'd in this: that a man is able to deny himself his own desires."[31] If a person temporarily felt he or she had lost the esteem the superego awards to self, the loss could be repaired by resisting a temptation to excessive power, aggression, money, or love.

In *The Protestant Temperament*, Philip Greven cites the Reverend Aaron Burr writing to Jonathan Edwards, his father-in-law, in 1741 that "from my childhood I used to be under distress in mind [owing to] a guilty conscience and the fears of hell; at these times as I remember I used to get relief by promises and resolutions. . . . I used to set myself as 'twere in the presence of God and make over his resolutions which would give me ease." Greven adds that the evangelical Puritans of the seventeenth and eighteenth century "often felt

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themselves to be capable of bringing about their own salvation by the exercise of their own wills and by the power they felt they had over their own actions and lives."[32]

It is critical that during this historical period the person was able to administer the reward autonomously; he did not need the help of other people or good luck. This quality of self-control was central to a definition of maturity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a book for parents entitled *Studies in Character Building*, E. E. Kellogg wrote: "Self control is one of the most essential and likewise one of the fundamental traits of a well-balanced character. . . . Control of self . . . enables one to suppress or hold in check tendencies, inclinations, impulses which may arise either through external influences or from the promptings of one's own inner nature."[33]

In contemporary society, the relentless seeking of power, friends, fame, wealth, and love has lost its status as a sin; these goals have become rather prizes to obtain. The modern definition of unworthiness is failure to gain these resources. Put plainly, it is extremely difficult for an adult who is poor, powerless, and lonely to feel virtuous because he knows he has resisted the lusts of a corrupt society. In sharp contrast with Aaron Burr, the modern American is less able to administer to self the elixir of worth *solely through his own acts*. He is dependent, to a large degree, on the behaviors and decisions of others, events over which he does not have complete control. That condition is likely to generate a mood of anxiety rather than the affect of conflict characteristic of the Puritans. The search for morality by contemporary youth and adults is a search for a standard of virtue that can be met whenever one chooses, for each *person* wishes to control the distribution of moral reassurance.

Appreciation of each person's inability to guarantee access to the ideal spilled over to dampen the school's optimism. "The general public should realize the inability of the school to cope singlehandedly with the task of creating character, or successfully to counteract the great forces of evil in the larger world into which the child is to be plunged."[34]

I believe that, as the attainment of specific technical skills and positions of status not available to all (in contrast to the capacity for inhibition, which all could meet) became the primary components of the definition of self-value, a change of mood occurred. That mood pervades contemporary society and dominates our classrooms. Without some of the external characteristics that currently define virtue, including access to a college education, wealth, positions of dominance, and a love relationship, the average adolescent and adult will have unusual difficulty reassuring self of its value. But each of these characteristics cannot be had through will alone. There are consequences to depriving the self of the power to guarantee reassurance through its own behavior: a chronic mood of anxiety owing to the uncertainty of success; anger that explodes into consciousness when ego knows that failure can be assigned to the reflective actions of others; and a need to compete with and exploit potential rivals for the limited prizes.

There is much popular dissatisfaction with these social facts, for the media bemoan the lack of morality and celebrate the most trivial display of honesty—a lead editorial in *The Sunday Globe*,[35] for example, praised two boys for returning to an erring machine located outside a bank the $50 given them by mistake.

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The contemporary adolescent does not see himself as a potent agent in his own salvation. We excuse his defects because of past experiences he could not avoid. We attempt to correct his flawed surface of talents with tutoring, and if that fails, we blame the tutor. We behave as if we do not believe the person can either help himself or desires to do so. The conception of self as an impotent organ in an impersonal and stochastic environment may reflect the fact that many feel *no* action they undertake, when the inclination arises, will guarantee a small dose of self-satisfaction. Cornelius Osgood listed the mottoes posted in a rural school in southwestern China in 1938: respect for teachers, affection for peers, endurance of hardship, carefulness with time, cleanliness, cooperativeness, persistence, and restraint in smoking and gambling.[36] Each was potentially within the capacity of all students. Few American high schools would mount these mottoes at the front of a classroom, for too few adolescents would gain private feelings of worth from attempting to be loyal to them.

The Role of the Schools

Western society faces a set of social facts quite different from those existing at the turn of the century. The new outsiders (blacks and Hispanics) live in a society with many more educated citizens than did the immigrants of 1910. There is more ambivalence toward the value and status of college-trained professionals, less faith in the rehabilitative power of schooling. As critical is the recognition that the narcissism of each citizen has reached a point where it is destroying some of the psychological gains that come from technical advances and productivity. We must adjust to this new set of social facts and for a while work on the community's wounds, which are in need of repair. The schools can be of some help in this mission.

Although the schools serve the community and therefore are unable to maintain a coherent ethic completely at odds with the society in which they function, they have the power, nonetheless, to affect their context a little. W. J. Bouwsma notes:

> The role of the educational theorist may be somewhat like that of a statesman: not so much to create a new ideal for education as to sense what is already present in a latent form. His greatest talent, aside from his articulateness, is his ability to perceive with skill and sensitivity the changing needs of his time; thus he expresses, clarifies and consolidates perceptions that have remained, for others, still below the level of consciousness. But the ability to do this well, like the ability to manage the tangled affairs of states, requires a talent of the highest order.[37]

It is within the power of the school to ameliorate the bouts of anxiety and despair that permeate the mood of many American adolescents. The apprehension originates in the unwelcome realization that one's personal value is too dependent on the achievement of peers. The yoking of virtue to successful competition makes rivals of friends, creating occasional hostility between them. Eighteenth century Americans concerned with education were aware of the potentially divisive consequences that followed the awarding of distinction to a few. Robert Coram urged that "no medals or premiums of any kind . . . be given under the mistaken notion of exciting emulation. Like titles of nobility, they are not productive of a single good effect but of many very bad ones."[38]

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The despair arises not only from performance failure but also from the realization, albeit dim, of the arbitrariness of ethical suppositions, the stochastic nature of events that affect the future in serious ways, and the relative absence of opportunities for adolescents to affirm their utility. They make no contribution of consequence to family or society, yet absorb the resources of both. I suggest that the increasing frequency of depression and suicide among American adolescents is due, partly, to a despondency bred by these conditions.

The moral purpose temporarily created by the events of the late 1960s has not been replaced by an analogous crusade, even though the sons and daughters of the Moral Majority are trying. I believe the schools can play an ameliorative role by providing opportunities for adolescents to persuade themselves of their virtue through acts whose benevolent consequences are not so dependent upon chance, the vicissitudes of peer and adult opinion, or the relative competence of others. The new rituals must have the veneer of reasonableness, but there are practices that will satisfy that criterion, too. One category of behavior involves acts of kindness that are part of a consensual legitimization of a mood of compassion—what the residents of Ifaluk in the West Carolinas would call *fago*. Many high-school students, for example, if sufficiently motivated, can tutor elementary schoolchildren having serious academic difficulties. Indeed, some high schools have already implemented such programs, and although formal evaluation is not yet available, informal reports are generally positive. Participation in programs that provide companionship to residents of nursing homes is also within the sphere of competence of most adolescents. All that is necessary is the school superintendent's willingness to make the structural arrangements.

The schools can also help remedy the serious schism between character and talent in the evaluation of adolescents and adults. Unlike the Greeks, who demanded both skill and morality from their athletes, we treat these as separable. The British Academy, arguing that scholarship is independent of behavior as a citizen, voted recently not to expel an outstanding humanistic scholar who was a traitor. And Ilya Nastase is allowed to play in international tennis matches despite uncivilized deportment on the courts.

There are at least two reasons why we treat talent and character as orthogonal and celebrate the former more enthusiastically than the latter. Perhaps the most important is based on meritocratic views so necessary to a pluralistic society. Because our community, which requires adults with special technical competences, is composed of so many diverse cultural groups, the potential for all to gain status mandates indifference to the special profile of values subscribed to by each subgroup. It seems to many that it is only necessary to judge skill and to ignore all other considerations. It is, of course, easy to defend such parsing of a person when practiced in moderation, but rigid adherence to this principle has a poisonous quality.

A second reason may resemble the bases for Kant's reluctance to consider emotion in the assessment of morality. According to Bernard Williams, Kant was troubled by the capriciousness of human emotion and its power to impose a passive frame on rational processes.[39] Of greater relevance to this discussion is Kant's belief that adults differed biologically in their capacity for compassion. Hence, if emotion participated in moral choice, one could not assume that all persons would be equally capable of a correct decision—some might be morally

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elite. Further, evaluation of character does not yield easily to a rationally based algorithm for quality, and is obviously correlated with conditions of rearing, an event over which children have no control. Thus it appears to be a sentimental and unfair basis for the awarding of privilege. There seems to be no measuring rod for honesty that has the objectivity and apparent justice that comes from summing the number of A's or successful field goals.

Our reverence for the maximal actualization of individual talent, however, despite its praiseworthy democratic intentions, has created its own form of elitism, for we award more value to characteristics only a few can obtain than to dispositions within the competence of the vast majority. Despite motivation and persistence, only a small number can compose sonatas, discover new particles, or predict next year's gross national product. But because all are capable of honesty, it does not arouse us emotionally, and we are reluctant to award it distinction. For some, a moral life is the only sphere where the need for a personal domain of expertise can be gratified. It is possible to interpret Gandhi's central life choice as a final attempt to find a sphere of action where he could meet his high standards of accomplishment.

I believe that the schools should explicitly announce that the whole person is being judged—intentions and behavior with others as well as talent. The best synthesis of belief, behavior, and skill—what the nineteenth century would have called character—must, as hinted at earlier, accommodate to the social facts that define a historical era. When excessive dependence on the family interfered with personal and societal needs, autonomy became more virtuous. A majority of American families now believe that the balance between self-enhancement and communion has been lost, and the point of tension must be reset in order to restrain complete commitment to self-aggrandizement. Thus I borrow from both the moral absolutists as well as the utilitarians in suggesting the dimensions of character to be celebrated, at least until the balance is restored. Kindness, restraint on aggression, honesty, and a reasonable blend of pride and humility stand at the top of my list for several reasons. First, the community currently needs more citizens to practice these standards, and many youth are dissatisfied with the callous acts of privacy, cheating, lying, and, on rare occasions, destruction of a peer's notes they are forced to in order to survive in a system that can award special merit to only a few. But my observations of children persuade me that kindness and control of aggression have a natural priority in development. Three-year-olds spontaneously offer toys to peers in distress and are reluctant to strike another, unless the latter intrudes or threatens. Honesty and humility do not come as naturally, but they are within the potential profile of most youth. (I recognize that many might select different qualities to encourage. In a recent essay, "Moral Philosophy for Education," Robin Barrow nominated curiosity, a concern with rationality, and empathy as the personal qualities to be enhanced in the schools, because, he argued, they are in accord with rule utilitarianism.[40])

I submit that the promotion and evaluation of character in the schools, along with intellectual accomplishment, is desirable and feasible. Acts of honesty, cooperation, and nurturance are public events that the staff of a school can tally and use to assign individual evaluations that are understood to be essential complements to subject mastery. We do not keep such records as faithfully as

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course grades, because we do not believe the schools should judge motives and behavioral attitude toward others; that is a task for the home and police department. But judging youth on standards for action and talent would make it possible for many more students to participate in, and identify with, the school community.

I do not suggest that academic mastery be ignored or replaced only by a concern with acts of service. Cognitive skills are not a contrast class to moral qualities. Many youth use mastery of science and mathematics as signs of their virtue because home and school have declared them as symbols of penance. To be ranked in the top 5 percent of one's class is treated by many middle-class youth as a religious victory. It is true that some claim it is unfair to change the literal components of the catechism just when children from minority groups are gaining access to quality education. But there is no need or desire to place less emphasis on intellectual skills in the classroom. The plea is to add to this symbol of virtue other acts and qualities that are more easily attained and fill a deep social need.

I do not believe that the introduction of practices that permit students to gain a sense of virtue through actions that are not strictly academic would produce less competent engineers or physicians. The society, like the school, works on the principle of ranking. Lip service is paid to the idea of an absolute level of ability, but in practice, it is the rank in an age cohort that determines reward. The mean SAT scores are lower today than they were three decades ago, but there is no evidence that today's professionals, whether legal, medical, scientific, or architectural, are less able than those of the 1950s.

The majority of American youth will not hold positions of responsibility for others, but will be members of an increasingly depersonalized work force. It is useful for society that they believe they are in control of some events of significance and persuaded that they possess some measure of grace. The high schools can facilitate the attainment of these goals, but, to do so, they must reflect more seriously on their current suppositions and practices.

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